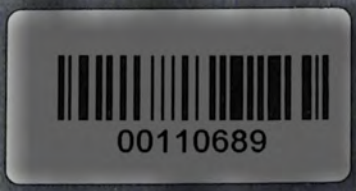
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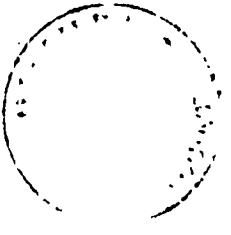

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SERMONS

TO A COUNTRY CONGREGATION.

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BY

AUGUSTUS WILLIAM HARE, A.M.

LATE FELLOW OF NEW COLLEGE,

AND RECTOR OF ALTON BARNES.

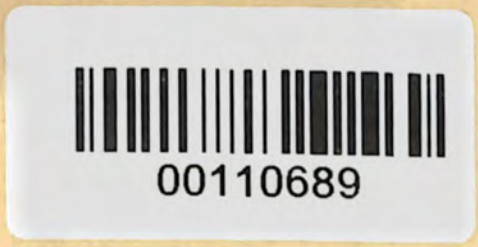
FIFTH EDITION.

SECOND VOLUME.

LONDON:

J. HATCHARD AND SON, 187, PICCADILLY.

1841.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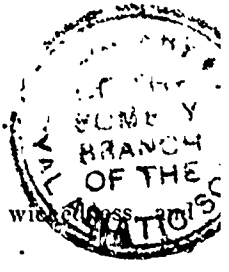

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SERMONS.

SERMON I.

USE THE BIBLE.

LUKE viii. 11.

The seed is the word of God.

NEVER were there so many Bibles in the world, as within the last few years. Here in England there are at least five times as many as there were fifty years ago. Our first feeling on hearing this ought to be thankfulness to God, for having sown the seed of eternal life in this favoured land so plentifully. But this brings the parable of the sower into our thoughts. One cannot help remembering the sad lesson it teaches,—that a great deal of seed may be sown to very little purpose; and that, if we are not careful how

we hear and read, the mere reading and hearing can do us no good. Thus we are led to look a little closer into the matter, and to ask ourselves such questions as these. Has the increase of godliness amongst us kept pace with the increase of our Bibles? Are we as much better as we ought to be with our more abundant means? Has the fresh seed scattered over the land produced a proportionate increase in the harvest? These are very important questions. For, if the Lord of the farm, if the great Sower does not see the promise of a crop in some measure answering to the good seed he has bestowed on the land, he will be sure to ask, "Why is this? Did I not sow good seed in the fields of England? How then come they to be so full of tares? so full of thistles? so full of poppies? How is it that in some parts of the farm I even see the foxglove and the deadly nightshade? Useless weeds, gaudy weeds, weeds that overrun the ground, even poisonous weeds I see in it. But I see not that plenty of good wheat which I ought to find, and which alone can be stored in my barn. Why has the crop failed so shamefully?"

The failure of a crop must be owing to one or more of these four causes. Either the seed must be bad; or the season must be bad; or the land must be bad; or the tillage must be bad. Now the

failure of a crop of holiness, if the crop has failed, in England, cannot be owing to the first of these causes. For the seed is as good as ever. The Bible has not grown worse, or lost any of its virtue. It is the same book it always was; and is just as able now, as it can ever have been of yore, to make men wise unto salvation. Nor is the failure of the crop owing to any peculiarly bad season. The influence of the Holy Ghost still falls, like mild showers, gently and plentifully on men's hearts, to soften and fit them for receiving the word of God. The Sun of Righteousness still shines and reigns in heaven; and from his golden throne, when the good wheat has sprung up and come to ear, he pours down warmth enough to ripen it and bring it to perfection. Nor again is the failure of the crop owing to the badness of the soil. Bad enough it is to be sure naturally: but we know how much the very worst soil may be bettered by care and labour. At any rate it is not worse now, man's heart is not worse now, than it was formerly. If it brought forth fruit formerly,—nay, if in thousands and thousands of cases it is made to bring forth good fruit now, fruit that we can see and judge of, in the holiness, the uprightness, the meekness, the patience, the humble faith of sincerely good Christians,—then it clearly cannot be the badness of the land that causes the failure

of the crop. The land might be brought into cultivation, in spite of its natural badness,—the heart might be reclaimed, in spite of its natural corruption,—were proper care and pains bestowed on it. But in too many cases they are not. This is the woful truth; and to this is the scantiness of the crop owing. It is owing, we can trace it, to no other cause: it is owing to nothing but badness of tillage. The land is no worse than it used to be; the seasons are as good as ever; the Sun of Righteousness still sheds light and warmth; the dew of the Holy Spirit still falls; the Word is still the seed of eternal life; it is scattered much more plentifully; much more land is sown: and yet, owing to the sloth, or the folly, or the dishonest negligence of the men to whom God has let his farm, the crop with all these advantages has not increased in due proportion. Think you then, God will leave his farm in the hands of persons who so neglect it? Think you, he will continue to pour down the riches of his grace on us in such abundance, if we continue to disregard it, and to make him no return for it? Remember the barren fig-tree.

These are some of the thoughts and questions, which spring up in the mind of a thinking person on his hearing what a vast number of Bibles and New Testaments have been sold and given away

in England in the course of the last thirty years. But another step is wanting to make these questions practically useful; and that is, to apply them to ourselves. Have we made the most of the opportunities which God has vouchsafed to us, of reading his word and learning his will? Some of us have enjoyed these opportunities from childhood upward; and these have the more to answer for. Others had fresh opportunities of the kind offered them last spring and summer; and many of you embraced them eagerly. You shewed a becoming wish for the most part to obtain the word of God. You did obtain it. You have had the Bibles and New Testaments that you were so properly desirous of, some of you eight months, some longer. What use have you made of them? Have you used the book at all? Have you used it regularly? Have you read it for the purpose of trying to learn the will of God? Have you read it thankfully, and felt grateful to God, that, while so many of the wise and rich heathens are pining from lack of food for their souls, you have plenty,—that, while they are left in darkness, you see? Have you read it devoutly, and prayed to God that he would enable you to understand what you read? so that you might apply the promises and the threats of Scripture, each to his own wants. Above all, have you endeavoured to prac-

tise what you have learnt? Have you kept well in mind that it is useless to read about God's will, unless we also do it? In a word, have you wished, and tried, and prayed, to become, not wiser only by your reading, but better? These are home and searching questions perhaps; but they are no way the worse for that. If they help you to search out the nature of your soul's disorder, be it spiritual sloth, or thoughtlessness, or a disregard for God's holy word,—be your spiritual malady what it may,—if these questions lead you to search it out, one of these days you will be thankful for them. As to their being home questions, what is the pulpit made for? why is the preacher set here, except to call you *home?* Home, ye lost sheep, to the fold of Christ your Shepherd! Home, ye prodigal sons, to the house of your loving Father! Home, ye truant children! your God is calling, your Master and Saviour is waiting for you; hasten home to him. Sin is not your home; for ye are heaven-born spirits! Earth is not your home; for Christ has redeemed you from its bondage! You are free to go where you please: back then to your only true home, to heaven. These are the very invitations which we, who have received the ministry of reconciliation, are to utter before you in Christ's name. The preacher is ordained on purpose to call your wan-

dering hearts homeward. If the questions I have been putting to you help to do so,—if they awaken you to bethink yourselves that you have all a journey to take,—some of you perhaps a long one,—and that the Bible is a book of rules and directions, given you by your heavenly Father, to guide you on this journey, and to shew you the true and only road to his great mansion,—if they remind you that a book is of no use, unless it is read, and that reading is of no use, unless we practise what we read,—if these questions stir up thoughts of this kind within you, or put you in timely remembrance of these plain but most important truths, they do just what they ought to do. May God render them, and whatever else I may say to you in his name, and as his messenger, profitable to the welfare of your souls!

But questions are of no use, unless they are answered, and answered truly. I would therefore advise every one who owns a Bible or a New Testament, to think well what answer he can make to the questions I have been asking. They who can say yes, from the bottom of the heart, to all those questions,—they whose conscience bear them witness that they have regularly, thankfully, and with prayer to God searched the Book of Life, for the sake of learning how to live,—these have good reason to rejoice: for they may feel sure that

their prayers will be heard, and that their search after God will be rewarded. Though he may seem to hide himself from them for a season, it is only to draw them on to seek him with greater earnestness. He is near them all the time, and sooner or later will unveil himself. Just as men see, and can bear to look on the image of the sun in a clear fountain, so shall all such persons see God reflected in the character of his Christ. They shall see him in Christ's purity; they shall see him in Christ's patience; above all, they shall see him in Christ's love. He will teach them every truth necessary for their souls: he will lead them by his Spirit along the paths of holiness. On them the good seed will not be thrown away; but they shall bring forth the fruit of good living every year more and more, until their Master sends Death to reap them, and gather them into his heavenly barn.

Such will be the blessed lot of those who are making a right use of God's good book, if they only persevere as they have begun. If they do not persevere, I need hardly tell you, all they have done hitherto will go for nothing. Their object as farmers is to house their corn: their object as travelers is to reach their home. If a man had to receive a legacy by going to Bristol, what good would it do him to set out on his

way thither, unless he went all the way? Would he get anything by going as far as Melksham, or even as far as Bath, unless he went still further? The legacy is to be paid at Bristol, and nowhere else: and if the man is lazy or fickle enough to stop before he gets to Bristol, not a sixpence of it will he receive. Therefore we must persevere unto the journey's end, if we would have a share in Christ's great legacy. Or how would it fare with the farmer? If he were to leave his crop to rot on the ground, rather than be at the pains to harvest it, what good will his having sown it do him? Sowing is nothing, unless we also reap: and even reaping the corn is nothing, unless we afterward house it. But perhaps you will tell me, I am talking of impossibilities: for no man, who thought a legacy worth going after, was ever known to stop half way; nor did any person, after ploughing and sowing his field, ever fail, when summer came, to harvest it. You would say truly. These are impossibilities in earthly matters; but are they impossibilities in heavenly matters? Do persons, after starting on their heavenly journey in the morning of life, with a heart full of godly resolutions, never flag? never loiter? never stop short? never turn round and ride back again? Do they, after putting their hand to the plough, never leave it in mid furrow?

Would it were so! Heaven would be much fuller than it is. God's army is weakened not so much by desertion, as by straggling; and for one wretch who goes over openly and gives himself up to Satan, twenty are cut off by him, while they are idling and lingering in the rear.

Hitherto I have been speaking to those who have been making a good use of their Bibles and New Testaments: and I have said such things as seemed likely to stir them to perseverance. But are there not some among you who have neglected to use their books? To them I will only say, Begin. If the miser's folly is great, who starves amid his chests of treasure,—if the sailor's folly would be great, who tried to steer without chart or compass,—if the farmer's folly would be great; who left his fields unsown,—how much greater must your folly be, who make no use of the charts and compass God has given you to guide you through the shoals of this world, who let your minds lie fallow of holiness, and who, with the food of angels on your shelves, starve your souls to death. Remember, man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. God's word is a portion of the food he has given to man to live by. It is the spiritual sustenance he has provided to support the spiritual part of us, the soul. For the soul, as well as the

body, requires its fitting food. Both must be supported and nourished, if we would have them thrive. Were a man to feed nothing but the spiritual part of him, were he to do nothing but read and think and pray, we all know he would die of hunger. His body would pine away for want of bodily sustenance. And think you, if a man feeds nothing but his body, that his soul does not in like manner fall away and grow weaker and weaker for want of that spiritual food, which is its proper nourishment? I tell you, at last it would become so feeble, were it to go without all spiritual food, that a mere straw of a temptation would be strong enough to overthrow its strongest resolution. The truth however is, that a man's soul is never left quite without all spiritual nourishment, so long as he comes to church, and attends to what goes on there. But church comes only once a week: and if the soul gets no spiritual food, beyond what it may pick up there, I leave you to judge whether it is likely to shoot up into a strong and healthy growth of godliness.

Wonder not that I speak to you of spiritual food. Does not all nature cry, from every part of the creation, that everything earthly must be fed? Fire must be fed: water must be fed: even the earth itself, which feeds all things, must be fed: else it will crumble into dust, or harden into a

rock. So is it with the soul. That too, as well as the body, must be fed with food suited to its nature. This is so plain, that the heathens themselves knew it. They were fully aware that the soul would never thrive, unless it was nourished with food suitable to it: and to find that food was the great desire of the best and wisest men among them. With this view they betook themselves to philosophy, as they called it, that is, to the study of wisdom, in the hope of nourishing their souls with that. Alas! if we take out the few good grains which they found among the sweepings of the granary of tradition, if we take out the crumbs which some few of them had picked up under the children's table, their philosophy was little better than the acorns which the prodigal son was fain to stay his hunger on, because he could get nothing else. They staid their spiritual hunger on the acorns of philosophy: because with all their search they could get nothing sounder or better. Now if they did this, they who only knew that their spirits required food, from feeling them crave for it, what will God say to us, if we are less anxious about the nourishment of our souls? We have been taught that man does not live by bread alone: we have been exhorted by Christ himself not to labour only for the meat that perisheth, but rather for that good meat which endureth to everlasting life.

Thus we have not been left to find out of ourselves, that our souls need support: we have had this truth declared to us; and a command has been given us to feed them. Moreover the food is set before us. Those who have Bibles or New Testaments have it on their shelves: they have only to take and eat. If we then, who, instead of the acorns of man's wisdom, have the word of God, which is the bread of life, that word which our hearts can thrive on, that word which our souls may live by ages after this world has past away, —if we will not take this heavenly food, even when it has been so bountifully placed within our reach, how inexcusable shall we be!

For the Bible is not a charm, that keeping it on our shelves, or locking it up in a closet, can do us any good. Nor is it a story-book to read for amusement. It is sent to teach us our duty to God and man, to shew us from what a height we are fallen by sin, and to what a far more glorious height we may soar, if we will put on the wings of faith and love. This is the use of the Bible; and this use ought we to make of it. Use it then for this purpose, each according to his means. All indeed have not time for much reading; but every one who wishes it, may at least manage to read a verse or two, when he comes home of an evening, and of a morning before going to work. Now a couple

of verses well thought over will do a man more good than whole chapters swallowed without thought. Do but this little, my brethren; and God, who judges us according to our means, and who looked with greater favour on the two mites of the poor widow, than on all the golden offerings of the rich, will accept your two verses, and enable your souls to grow and gain strength by this their daily food. Christ, who is the way of life, will open your eyes to see the way. He will send you the wings I just spoke of; and they shall bear you up to heaven.

For this must be always kept in mind, that God alone giveth the increase. Unless he gives it, no increase shall we receive. Our light will not be increased; so that we shall gain no new insight into the wondrous things of God's law. Our joy will not be increased; so that the study of God's book will continue an irksome task. Our labour will be without fruit; because it has been without a blessing: and we shall have to say, as the apostles did, before Jesus came to help them in their fishing, "We have toiled all night, and have caught nothing" (Luke v. 5). The only way of insuring that our labour shall not be thus fruitless, is by prayer: the only way of drawing down a blessing on our study, is to ask for it. Let us pray then to Jesus, the Author of our faith, that he will

finish the good work he has begun. Let us beseech him to come to us by his Spirit, and join himself to us, as he came and joined himself to the apostles, that our studies may prosper, and our labour be successful, and that out of the living waters of salvation we may draw truth, and hope, and constancy in well-doing, and gentleness, and active love toward all our fellow-creatures. Let us beseech him that "through patience and comfort of the Scriptures we may have hope" (Rom. xv. 4). For unless there be patience, there can be no comfort. If a medicine is to do us good, we must take it. If we read the Bible in the spirit of patience, it will bring us to a knowledge of ourselves. It describes and lays bare every evil propensity, every weakness, every wandering, to which the heart of man is liable. It comes home to our business and to our bosoms. It puts its finger on the dark spot within us, and plainly and loudly utters in the ears of every one those dreadful words, "Thou art the man." As you love truth, as you prize the welfare of your souls, do not shrink from that touch, however painful; do not shut your ears against those warning words, however harsh. Be patient of Scripture truths. Place yourselves honestly, after prayer to God, in the light of those passages of the Bible, which fall the most piercingly on your besetting sin. Look at

yourselves narrowly by that light: it will scatter any fogs which may be covering the hollows of your conscience, and will lead you from the darkness of contented ignorance into the pure and marvellous brightness of God. Begin with patience of God's holy word, and you will assuredly get in time to the comfort of it. Let us only be persuaded that our strength at the best is but weakness; let us be brought to feel that we are labouring under a sickness, which none save God can heal, that we are threatened by dangers which he alone can ward off, that he, and none else, can deliver us from the burthen of our sorrow; let us be made to acknowledge these truths, and the Scriptures will become a well-spring of delight to us. For they, and they alone, shew our Maker to us in the character in which we shall then feel that we want him. We shall no longer ask with the confident lawyer, or with the self-satisfied young man, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke x. 25). A much more painful question bursts from our stricken and bleeding hearts; and we cry out with the jailor of Philippi, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts xvi. 30). The Bible, and the Bible alone, gives an answer to this question. For it speaks not of God alone, nor of man alone, but of God and man at once,—of God reconciled to man for the sake and merits

of his Son: it speaks of the very thing which in our heaviness we long to hear of. Whatever may be the wounds we are suffering from, it has a balm and a medicine to heal them. As the good Samaritan poured oil and wine into the wounds of the bleeding and fainting Jew, so do the Scriptures apply a like remedy to our wounded hearts, even the blood of the Son of God, which answers to the wine, and the anointing and sustaining influence of the Holy Spirit, which acts the part of the sweet and healing oil. In a word, the Bible sets before us the divine Emmanuel, God with us, who is not ashamed to call us brethren, —who places himself at our head, like a valiant captain, to cheer and lead us on to victory,—and who, having himself endured temptation, knows its danger and its power, and is therefore ready to succour us in the hour of trial, if we will only call to him for help.

This is the great comfort of the Scriptures, even Christ, "the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation." His glorious coming is called in the Gospel "the consolation of Israel" (Luke ii. 25). When spiritually laid hold of, and practically applied by each man to his own needs, it is still the consolation of every true Christian. To us also, if we so lay hold on it, and so apply it, will it become a principle of life. Not of a fleshly

and animal life, such as we share with beasts and birds; not of a life frail and perishable, which an accident may snap short at any moment; nor again of a life gross and sensual, which is merely the life of the baser part of us, the body, but the death or numbness of the soul. The life that God's word sows within us, is pure and spiritual and deathless. It is the blessed hope of everlasting life, which we are to embrace and hold fast through our Saviour.

But how can such a life,—this is the last point I shall touch on,—how can a life of this kind begin here? It can begin,—and, what is more, it must begin here, or it will never begin at all,—in our putting on the likeness of God and of his Son, whom to know and to follow after is life eternal. He is the true God, says St John in his first Epistle, and eternal life. Would you have eternal life, the hope of it, the foretaste of it in this world? you must draw near to Christ. He has promised that, if we draw near to him, he will draw nigh to us, and at last will come and take up his abode in our hearts, and will light the everlasting lamp of truth and love within us. An eternal life, I need hardly tell you, must be a heavenly life. Lead heavenly lives then; and your lives will be eternal. But what are heavenly lives? such lives as are led in heaven, where all obey God's will.

Such a life as our Saviour led on earth, whose meat and drink it was not to do his own will, but the will and the work of God the Father. Follow then after God's will faithfully and stedfastly: take the example and the principles of your Master for your guides: and they will lead you, it may be, through much trouble,—I have no warrant to promise you a freedom from earthly trials,—it may be, through evil report and contempt; for as they called your Master Beelzebub; and St Paul mad, so will men at times speak ill of you, and think you meanspirited and foolish. But, if you can bear up under these crosses,—and Christ for your sakes was loaded with a much heavier, —if you can walk along, notwithstanding your afflictions, in the path which Jesus trod before, it will bring you through the valley of the shadow of death to the glorious threshold of heaven. Is the path too rough for the delicate feet of human pride and passions? Let your feet be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; and you will find the path bearable enough. Be it rough, however, or be it smooth, walk along it we must, if we would go to heaven. For I should be deceiving you, if I did not tell you plainly, that the straight, the narrow, and the toilsome road, is the only one that leadeth upward.

We must imitate the behaviour of Jesus here, if we would live with him hereafter. That sublime devotion, which made his whole life one unceasing prayer, his pure, meek, self-denying spirit, his love of all men, his special delight in those who shewed themselves by their faith to be true children of God,—these qualities, which are written in Scripture for our instruction, must all be copied by us, and written in our hearts and lives, before we can hope to have communion with the saints above. Amongst them such tempers, and no others, can gain admission: amongst them such tempers, and no others, could be happy.

SERMON II.

GOD'S JUDGEMENTS.

2 PETER ii. 9.

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgement to be punished.

IF I were asked to say in a few words, what is the difference between the Old Testament and the New, I should answer, that the Old Testament is the book of God's judgements, and the New Testament the book of God's mercies. I do not mean, that there are no stories of God's judgements against sin in the New Testament. There are several, as most of you, I trust, are well aware. There is the story of Judas Iscariot, who was driven by the stings of conscience to hang himself. There is the story of Ananias and Sapphira, who fell down dead for lying to the Holy Ghost. There is the story of Elymas, the sorcerer, who was

struck blind for withstanding the preaching of the Gospel. So on the other hand are there many beautiful and interesting stories of God's mercies and lovingkindness in the Old Testament. Still, notwithstanding these exceptions, in the history of the New Testament, generally speaking, we see God, as he is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them; while in the history of the Old Testament we see him in all the dreadful majesty of holiness, as the God to whom vengeance belongeth, and who will by no means clear the guilty. In a word, as I said before, the Old Testament is the history of God's judgements, the New Testament is the history of God's mercies.

That the New Testament on the whole, is a book of mercy, none, I conceive, will doubt; and I shall not stop to prove it. But so is the Old Testament a book of judgements. What was the Flood, but a great and terrible judgement on all the inhabitants of the earth? What was the destruction of the cities of the plain, but a dreadful judgement? And were not the ten plagues, wherewith God plagued the land of Egypt, heavy judgements? And the destruction of the seven Canaanite nations, which we read of in the book of Joshua,—and all the afflictions which God sent upon the children of Israel, whenever they forsook

his ways to walk after idols, afflictions and visitations which the book of Judges and the books of Kings are filled with,—and the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, and of the kingdom of Judah, of Samaria, and of Jerusalem, and of God's own holy temple,—and the leading of the chosen people into captivity,—are not these all so many judgements? Verily the book which tells us all these things, may with good reason be called the history of God's judgements.

Now these histories of God's most righteous judgements have been read to you year after year, ever since you were old enough to come to this church. You have heard them over and over and over again. Well! what are you the better for them? Too many of you, it is to be feared, are nothing the better for them. Of those who are much the better for them, the number in all likelihood is very small. I do not say, that you are not the better for coming to church. I hope and trust and believe, that you are all of you the better for that. It is hardly possible for anybody to come to church regularly, and to be as bad as he would have been, had he made a practice of staying away. But a man may be much the better for coming to church,—he may be much the better for the service in church taken as a whole, without being noticeably the better for some one

part of it. Now, of all the parts of the service, the first Lesson is perhaps that by which people profit the least. Many are the better for the second Lesson, and all that it tells them about Jesus Christ. Many, it is to be hoped, are the better for the sermon. Some join in and profit by our beautiful prayers. But I am afraid that few get much good from the histories of God's judgements read to them out of the Old Testament. Now why is this? Simply because you listen to them as to wonderful stories of what befell such and such persons a long while ago, and not as to matters in which you yourselves have any interest or concern. How few ever ask themselves, when they leave the church, "What is the Flood to me? what is the burning of Sodom and Gomorrha to me? what are the plagues of Egypt to me? what are God's judgements on his chosen people to me? Why are they read to me year after year out of the book of God? What am I to learn from them? How am I to apply them to myself, so as to become better by having heard them?" These are the questions which you ought to ask yourselves, after hearing the history of God's judgements read to you out of the Old Testament: and yet how few ask them!

For it is a sad mistake to fancy that these stories do not concern us. They do concern us,

and very nearly. St Paul tells us of some of them, that they were written for our instruction. Shall we then remain uninstructed and unimproved by them? Let me try to put you in the way of profiting by these terrible and righteous histories. It is with this view that I have chosen my text, the meaning of which will be clear enough, when I have read a few of the verses before it. "If God (says the apostle) spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the Flood upon the ungodly, —and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample to those that after should live ungodly,—and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, —for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds,—if God has done all this, then surely the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgement to be punished."

This then is the lesson which we ought to draw from such terrible histories as those of the Flood, and the burning of Sodom and Gomorrha. On the one hand we are to learn from them, that God will not forget any godly man what-

ever, but will save him amid the destruction of all around him, will watch over him, and will bring him to good. On the other hand we are to learn from them,—and this is the main point, —that with the ungodly it will be otherwise,— that for them, so long as they continue in their ungodliness, there is neither mercy nor hope, but a fearful and certain looking forward to wrath and punishment at the hand of a mighty and offended God. Neither mercy is there, nor escape, for any one who does not repent and turn to God. Seeing that God did not spare his own world, the world which he had made and blessed,—seeing that he swept away all the children of Adam from the face of the earth by reason of their sin,—be ye assured, brethren, that he will not spare you, if you abide in your sins. No, there is no mercy for the obstinate and impenitent sinner. As for escape, what escape can there be from the eye and the hand of God Almighty? Whither shall the sinner go from his Spirit? or whither shall he fly from his presence? Even if he were to take the wings of the morning, and to hide himself in the uttermost parts of the sea, he would be just as much in God's hand there as in the home he was born and bred in. Though he plunged into the loneliness of the great desert, far away from the eye of man, in the midst of that desert he would hear God's

voice speaking plainly and loudly to his conscience. Believe me, it is a fearful thing for a sinner to feel himself alone with God. Some however think to escape God by taking another course, by hurrying into the midst of crowds and business,—crowds, which sooner or later will forsake them, business, which is sure to end in vanity and vexation of spirit. Others again think themselves safe, if they float along with the stream, and follow the multitude. They say within themselves, "Yes, no doubt God will punish a few great and outrageous sinners, such as murderers, and adulterers, and blasphemers. But he will never punish the millions upon millions, who go quietly along their own way, earning their bread, or making money, or following their calling, and picking up such pleasures as come across them. What though we never care or think about him? surely he will not punish us, if we do nothing worse than that." This, alas! is a very common notion. Yet it could never be so, if people attended to the histories of God's judgements in the Old Testament. For in those histories we continually read of God's punishing the many, because they were sinners, and only sparing the few, because the few only were righteous. He does not single out a few here and there to make examples of, while the many are allowed to

escape. It is the many, it is the multitude, who are punished; and only the very few are saved, by an act of special mercy. Look at the Flood. How many were saved out of the whole race of man? Only Noah and seven others. All the rest of mankind, thousands upon thousands, perished fearfully and miserably in the waters. How was it with the cities of the plain? Lot was saved out of them, and his two daughters. All the rest of the inhabitants, thousands upon thousands, were consumed by the fire and brimstone. Indeed so far are numbers from screening the wicked, they rather serve to draw down the wrath of God more speedily. Had there been many Noahs, there would have been no Flood. Had there been many Lots in Sodom, Sodom would not have been destroyed. Let no man therefore comfort himself by saying, "I am not worse, I am not more careless about religion, I am not more dishonest, I am not more selfish and worldlyminded, than my neighbours." I dare say there were many in Noah's time, who were every whit as good as their neighbours. Did that save them? They and their neighbours all perished together. So too will it be in the last day. Many perhaps may then plead before the judgement-seat of Christ, "We only did as others did; we were as good as our neighbours." But is this an excuse that our Judge

will listen to? He will condemn all such persons out of their own mouths, and will say to them, "You were like your neighbours in their wickedness: you shall now be like them in their punishment. You followed them, while on earth, in their evil ways: follow them now to their place of torment."

The two great lessons then to be learnt from such histories are, the extent of God's most fearful judgements, and their certainty. His judgements fall not on a few, but on all. Those who are with Noah in the ark live: all the rest perish. Those who come forth with just Lot live: all the rest perish. So will it be in the last day. Those who are with the blessed Jesus, those who have taken refuge in the saving ark of his spiritual Church, those who have given heed to his righteous word, and have come forth with him from the sins of an ungodly world, shall be delivered: but they only: all the rest must perish everlastingly. For as the word of God's mercy is sure, so is the word of his wrath. It may not overtake us to-day, nor yet to-morrow: but in the end what he has spoken will surely come to pass. God is a righteous judge, strong and patient, although he is provoked every day. But if men will not turn to him for all his patience and forbearance, then he whets his sword, he bends his bow, he makes

ready the weapons of death, he pours down the arrows of his wrath, and lets loose the servants of his vengeance. Many were the days and years during which he bore with the wickedness of the old world: but at last their cup was full; and the Flood came and swept them away. Many too were the days and years during which he bore with the inhabitants of Sodom: but at length their cup was full; and the fire came down and destroyed them. So shall it be in the day of judgement with every impenitent sinner, that is, with every one who has not sought the Lord while yet he may be found, and has not turned to him when he is near. Year after year has God spared them, in the hope of bringing them to repentance. The doors of mercy have been thrown open to them: they have been called, they have been entreated to come in. If they will not, if they obstinately reject God's gracious offers of forgiveness, if they stubbornly refuse to forsake their evil ways, and to return to their heavenly Father with all their hearts, what can they expect, but that sure and certain vengeance, which will one day overtake the wicked? Let them not deceive themselves with false hopes of escaping. Let them not give ear to the lying serpent, when he whispers to them, "Ye shall not die." Rather let every sinner say within himself, "The longer

the storm is gathering, the heavier it is sure to fall. If the weight of God's judgements do not crush me in this world, it is only because a worse thing is prepared for me: it is only because the righteous Lord has reserved me for the day of judgement, to be punished according to my sins. O terrible voice of most just judgement! when it shall be said to me, Go, thou cursed, into everlasting fire."

And who are these cursed? All who are living in any known sin; all who are living in forgetfulness of God; all who are not Christ's people; all who are not shewing forth the blessed fruits of the Spirit in their daily lives. Many think it is enough, if they are not openly disgracing and opposing Christ: but they are mistaken. To be safe, they must be with Christ; they must be with him in the ark of his Church. Many trust they shall do well, if they keep from the grosser works of the flesh. They are mistaken: they must go much further: they must crucify, they must kill the flesh, with its affections and lusts: that is, they must wage war against every wrong feeling and every evil desire in their hearts, and must try to destroy them all, and to root them all out. They must take God's will for their law, God's words for their guide, God's blessed Son for their trust and hope. If ye do this, ye shall live: for then

you will come under the covenant of the New Testament, the covenant of grace and love; and God will to you be a God of mercy. But unless ye do this, ye have no part in Christ, no part in the covenant of grace: and so you are still exposed to all the wrath and all the fearful curses of the law. Your God is still the God of the Old Testament, the God who swept away an offending world, the God who rained fire and brimstone upon the cities of the plain, the God who has declared that he will reserve the unjust unto the day of judgement to be punished. Brethren, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of such a God. Take warning, therefore, I pray you, in time. As yet the door of escape is open to you. But no one knows how soon it may shut: and when once shut who can re-open it?

Some may perhaps be saying within themselves, "This is the old story, which we have heard so many times before." Is it indeed an old story to you? have you heard it so very often, and yet not heeded it? Then indeed have you double cause to tremble, for having slighted the Gospel so often and so long. If a man were lying on a bed of sickness, and a physician came to him, and told him to take this medicine and that, and the man were to answer, "These are the very medicines which have been given me for these days past,"—

would not this be a bad sign? Would not the physician say to him, "If you have taken all these medicines, and they have done you no good, your case is desperate indeed. I have no better medicines to give you. Try them once more. If they do you no good this time, there is no help for you; you must die." If a man has been called to repentance, without regarding it,—if the terrors of the Lord have been set before him, and he has not been moved by them,—if the promises of the Gospel have been held out to him, and all to no purpose,—what more can God's ministers do for such a man, except pray for him, and exhort him to pray earnestly for himself, that it may please God by some visitation, by some sickness, by some startling affliction, to rouse him out of his lethargy, and bring him to a better mind, so that he may escape the punishment reserved against the day of judgement for all who will not turn from their evil ways to God?

But there are many who are not thus hardened. To them I say, as the angel said to Lot, Escape for your life: escape to the mountain: fly to the only shelter from the coming storm: betake yourselves to Christ, that ye be not consumed among the wicked. Be not like Lot's sons-in-law, when they heard the message. They, when Lot went to warn them of the evil at hand, thought he was

telling them an idle tale: and yet it was a message from God. In like manner when the preacher warns his people to fly from the wrath to come, too many look on his warnings and invitations as so many words of course, which it is his business to utter from the pulpit, but which there is no need to carry into practice. It is quite right, they say and think, to come to the sermon, and to listen to it: but, as to doing what it says, such a thought never comes into their heads. Be not, I beseech you, brethren, like such vain foolish people. The message which I bring to you is from God. It is he who sends you merciful invitations to repentance, that you may be saved from the ruin of a wicked world. It is he who will bring to pass the threatenings of his word against all manner of unrighteousness and ungodliness and sin.

SERMON III.

THE BEST CHRISTIAN, THE BEST PATRIOT.

1 SAMUEL ii. 30.

Them that honour me I will honour: and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

I AM going to speak to you about the historical books of the Old Testament. By the historical books I mean the book of Joshua, the book of Judges, the two books of Samuel, the books of Kings and of Chronicles, in a word, all those parts of the Old Testament which contain the history of the children of Israel, and relate their dealings and goings on, from the time of Joshua, when they first crossed the river Jordan to conquer and take possession of the land of Canaan, down to the reign of Zedekiah, King of Judah, when Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, and the Jewish people were carried away captive far from their native land. These are the chief historical books of the Old Testament: out of them the lessons are

taken for thirteen Sundays together, that is, for a quarter of the year. Now what do we learn from the book of God during this quarter of a year? Why has our Church appointed the fourth part of every year for the reading of chapters from these historical books? What are the chief truths which the great body of Christians are to gather from them? For it must be clear to every one, that these chapters would not be read to you over and over again, year after year, unless the Church had hoped that the hearing them would in some way make you better. Moreover it must be clear to you, that a mere knowledge of the names and facts set down in these historical books can do you no good whatever. That Jehu was the captain who conspired against his master, that Joram was king of Israel, and Ahaziah king of Judah,—that the prophet Elisha's servant was called Gehazi,—what can it profit a man to know? Facts of this kind are like the beard of the barley: they are the part which comes first in sight, but yield no nourishment. If a person learnt nothing from Scripture, but a list of names and facts,—such as that Samson was the strongest man, and that Solomon was the wisest,—he would not be a jot the better for his knowledge. Knowledge of this sort may puff a man up with a vain conceit of his learning and cleverness; but most assuredly it cannot

edify. One little verse from the Sermon on the Mount would be worth it all.

The lessons we are to draw from the histories of the Old Testament are not of names and facts, but of laws and principles. We are to look on those histories as shewing us the wires and springs by which God governs the world. That he does govern the world, that all the nations of the earth are subject to him, and that he allots prosperity to this nation, and calamity to that nation, as seems best to him, we know. But in most cases we cannot make out the hows and the wherefores of his dealings with them. We see that one nation is raised, and another lowered: but the reasons of God's ordinances, and the way in which he brings his will to pass, are mostly hidden from us. So that the history of most countries may be likened to a great clock: we see the hands move, and hear the hours strike; but we cannot see and examine the works by which the hands are set in motion, and the hours are made to strike. With the history of the Jews however it is otherwise. In their case God has lifted up the veil, which mostly covers his dealings with mankind: he has shewn us the inside of the clock, and given us the means of observing how the wheels and pullies act upon the hands. In other words, he has set before us in the Bible, how

entirely the welfare of a nation depends upon the piety and true religion of the people. There is no truth appertaining to what is called political wisdom, so useful, so important, so indispensable to be known and kept in mind. In the history of the Jewish people, we see this truth set forth not once and again, but in every page. The sun does not ripen the wheat more regularly, or more constantly, than God's favour attends the Jews and prospers them, when they are stedfast to walk in his paths. Nor are weeds of all kinds more certain to spring up in a neglected piece of ground, than God's judgements to fall on the children of Israel, whenever their hearts are set on evil.

I was comparing the world and its goings on to a clock. If a savage were to see a clock, and were not to be told that there are works which make it go, he would probably fancy it a live creature, or at any rate that the hands went of themselves. But after being shewn the works of any one clock, after some person had explained to him the uses of the wheels, and the pendulum, and the other parts, he would have no difficulty in making out that other clocks move on somewhat of the same principle; and he would never fall back into his former ignorant conceit, that the hands of any clock could go of their own accord. The

mistake which I have supposed this ignorant savage to make about the going on of the clock, is the very same which the ignorant and irreligious are wont to make about the goings on of nations. They only see the outside of things. They will talk by the hour about the strength of armies, the size of fleets, the amount of revenues: they will tell you, that such a kingdom has done well, because it had this or that able man at its head; while such another kingdom has fallen into decay, because its manufactures have been neglected, and its trade managed upon unwise principles. Deeper than this the irreligious go not. They never look within, at the religious spirit and moral character of a people. Much less do they think of the great Clockmaker, who regulates all the nations of the earth, who alone can wind them up, and without whom they are sure to go down. According to these persons a nation goes of itself, just as, according to the savage, the clock goes of itself. But they who have duly learnt the lessons given us by the Jewish history in the Bible,—they who have been let in to a nearer view of the secrets of God's workmanship, and have been taught by a careful study of the Old Testament, that it is righteousness which exalteth a nation, and that thrones are established by holiness,—such persons are prepared to judge of the goings on of the world much

more piously, and much more wisely. They refer everything to God's providence. They try to trace the workings of his will throughout the web of human affairs; being well aware that, unless they follow its guidance, they can never hope to unravel so tangled a knot. Above all, they do their best, if I may so say, to obtain God's favour for their own country, knowing that, if he will but smile upon it, its safety and happiness are secured.

This is the great practical truth to be drawn from the historical books of the Old Testament: and the Church of England has wisely allotted a large portion of every year to a course of chapters teaching it: because it is a truth which it nearly concerns every one, poor as well as rich, to bear in mind. I repeat it, the truth, that the safety and happiness of kingdoms depends solely on God's blessing, is a truth which it concerns every Englishman, poor as well as rich, to keep in mind: for this plain reason,—because every Englishman can lend a helping hand toward drawing down that excellent blessing on his country. For what says king David in his fifth Psalm? "Let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice; let them even shout for joy, because thou defendest them; let them also that love thy name, be joyful in thee; for thou, O Lord, wilt bless the righteous." To the same effect writes Solomon in the book of Proverbs

(xi. 11): "By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted; but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked." From these texts we learn that God blesses the righteous in such a way, that by their means and for their sakes nations are exalted. My brethren, we as a people need no further exaltation. In wealth, in strength, in renown, in extent of rich and cultivated dominion, in variety of possessions in every quarter of the globe, no nation was ever equal to us. In these respects God has raised us to a height unknown before, and has placed us on the very spire and pinnacle of glory. Let us take good heed that the height does not make us giddy. Let us look well to our footing, that we slip not. And how is this to be done? By praying to God to hold up our goings in his paths; by trusting in God that his mercy will preserve us; by acknowledging the Lord in all our ways, and seeking his heavenly wisdom, whereby alone men walk safely, so that their feet do not stumble.

But now who is to do all these things? Who is it, that for his country's sake is thus to pray to God, and to trust in him, and to acknowledge him, and to seek his heavenly wisdom? Perhaps you will say, the King. And the King certainly should do so first and foremost: for he is the head of the state, and, as it were, its visible representative.

In him the majesty of the nation centres ; so that, whatever he does, the nation may be said to do. Besides he has the choice of the governors and magistrates of the realm: if he be righteous, the pious and good will be held in honour ; but if he be irreligious, the wicked and dissolute will be promoted. Therefore, seeing that the piety of the King concerns us all so very nearly, it is with good reason that we are taught to pray every Sunday, that it will please God, not only to keep him in health and wealth, and to give him the victory over all his enemies, but also to endue him plenteously with heavenly gifts, to fill him with the grace of the Holy Spirit, that he may incline to God's will, and walk in his way, and so to rule his heart in the fear and love of God, that he may above all things seek God's honour and glory.

But though the King ought certainly to set his people the example of honouring and serving God, unless the nation follow that example, his piety alone will not do. This was the state of things in the reign of the good king Josiah. We read that " like him there was no king before him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses ; neither after him arose there any like him." Nevertheless, when he sent to inquire of the Lord for himself and for his people,

to know whether God would bring on Judah the judgements he had denounced on their iniquities, what answer did the Lord make him? You will find it in the 22nd chapter of the 2nd Book of Kings. "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof; even all the words written in the book of the law of Moses, because they have forsaken me. But to the king of Judah, which sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him: Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against Jerusalem and the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, I also have heard thee, saith the Lord; and I will gather thee to thy fathers; and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil, which I will bring upon this place." Such are God's dealings when a righteous king is found at the head of an ungodly and hardened people. He does not overlook the wickedness of the nation, for the sake of their pious ruler: but he mercifully takes the good king from the evil to come, and then pours out his vengeance upon the guilty land.

It is not enough then for the King to devote himself to God's service, unless the body of the nation do so likewise. But who are the body of

the nation? and of whom is it made up? Surely it is made up of the King's subjects. All the English people taken together, all the men and women in England, make up the body of the English nation. Consequently you, my brethren, in your degree, and I in mine, each of us in his calling and station, forms a part,—a very small part, it is true,—but still a visible part, a living part, an accountable part of this great nation,—a nation of which we and the rest of the people are the body, and the King is the head.

Now let me take a step further, and ask you,—supposing a prophet from heaven were to denounce God's judgements against us, for being a sinful nation, what would he mean by the words? Isaiah shall explain them to you. After complaining of Judah for being a sinful nation, he proceeds thus: "A people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers: they have forsaken the Lord, they are gone away backward; from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it" (i. 4. 6). A sinful nation, in one very plain and important sense of the words, is a nation the people whereof are sinful from top to bottom. And what is the consequence of such sinfulness? To the sinful Jews it was desolation and destruction. What then have we reason to dread it would be to sinful Christians, whose light is so much brighter, and

whose opportunities are so much greater! The truth therefore, that states and kingdoms flourish and decay according to God's good pleasure, is indeed a practical truth, which concerns every one. For we see that the sins of a nation are made up of the sins of all the people in it. The drunkenness of one man, the uncleanness of another, the dishonesty of a third, the oppression and covetousness of a fourth, the unbelief and profaneness of a fifth,—these things, small as each of them may appear to be, make up the gross amount of a nation's guilt; just as a mountain may be made up of grains of sand, or as the great and deep sea, the very waves of which will rise mountain-high, is made up of a number of drops of water. There is an old and wise eastern proverb, that it is the last straw which breaks the camel's back: and we have a saying not unlike it, that it is the last drop which makes the cup run over. My brethren, who of us can tell how full the cup of God's wrath may even now be against this land? Who can tell how many, or rather how few drops it may want, to make it overflow and whelm us with the waters of bitterness? Whoever notes the signs of the times, whoever calls to mind the events of last winter, whoever recollects those secret midnight burnings, which we have all seen, but which a couple of

years ago no one had ever heard of, must perceive that this country is in a very dangerous state, more divided against itself, more tottering and unstable on the pinnacle of its greatness, than it has been before, either in our time, or in the time of our fathers. What can steady and preserve it but the hand of God? What can move him to stretch out that protecting hand, but the prayer and the repentance of his people?

The cup of God's anger then, to judge from appearances, is already full nearly to the brim: and every new sin adds a fresh drop to it. But God is not unmerciful, to mark the evil only. His eyes are also upon the good. It is for them, for his children, that the events of this world are disposed. It is for the sake of the wheat that the tares are spared, lest, as our Saviour says, while the tares are gathered up, the good wheat be rooted up also. Every additional ear of good wheat, every new convert to Jesus Christ, is so much added to the safety of England. Were all good, the nation would be righteous, and God's favour would rest upon us. The land would be like the garden of Eden, so that all who visited it would say, See the land which the Lord hath blessed! On the other hand if all were evil, if the people had altogether corrupted itself, and forsaken the law of God, the land would soon be turned into a wilderness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

At present we are neither all good, nor, praised be God! all evil. But good and evil, piety and ungodliness, justice and fraud, mercy and oppression, are carrying on a mighty struggle, and dividing the people of the land. In this great war there are no neuters. Every one who is not on Christ's side, is against him. Every one therefore must choose his side. On which side will you be? I ask you, each of you, will you be on the side of Christ, which is the side of blessing? or will you be on the side of sin, which is the side of cursing? Will you be on the side of godliness, which calls down blessings upon England? or will you be on the side of wickedness, which is drawing down curses upon England? Yes, every wicked act tends to draw down a curse upon the country and in that sense is the worst of treasons. Every good act on the contrary, every holy feeling, every true prayer, every victory over our baser appetites, every sacrifice of our will to the law of God, —every such act adds another stone to the spiritual rampart, which for so many years has surrounded and defended England. That rampart every one amongst us is either building up or pulling down. If the evil in the struggle overpower the good,—and every single desertion from good to evil makes the contest harder and more desperate,—if, I say, the evil should at last overpower the good,

—should the rampart of justice and holiness be overthrown, think what a deluge of wickedness will pour in! and wherever wickedness makes its way, misery and woe follow at its heels. If you would avoid this misery, labour to repair the breaches in the rampart; lest the words be spoken to us, which were spoken formerly to Ezekiel, "And I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none" (xxii. 30). May such words never be spoken to our country! God grant that England may never be without men to make up the hedge, and to stand in the gap before the Lord! God grant that she may never turn away from Him who alone can make up the hedge, who alone can stand in the gap before the Lord!

SERMON IV.

LOCK AND KEY;

OR,

PROPHECY AND INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY.

2 PETER i. 19—21.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the daystar arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

THIS is a hard text to understand fully: but its general meaning is clear; and we shall have no difficulty in gathering enough from it to make a very useful lesson. St Peter had been speaking of the proofs, which he and his brother apostles had received, of our Saviour's power and greatness. He

had mentioned the wonderful proof granted them when Jesus was transfigured "in the holy mount," when they were eyewitnesses of his brightness and majesty, and heard the voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." After urging this great proof, as a man would, who had seen and heard such wonders, he goes on to a second proof, the proof from prophecy. Of this he says, that Christians would do well to give heed to it; for that a prophecy is like a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn. As men burn a candle during the night to give light, so was God pleased to set up the lamp of prophecy in the world, to save mankind from being left in total darkness during the ages before the coming of Christ. This was the use of the prophecies before Christ's coming. They were designed to preserve a sense of God's goodness, and a recollection of his promises, to keep hope alive in the world, and to awaken men to the expectation of some great mercy, which God was preparing for his people, and would bring to light in due time.

But when the Sun of Righteousness had risen and chased away the darkness, the candlelight was no longer needed. Are we to suppose then, that the prophecies ceased to be of any use, when Jesus by his coming fulfilled them? They did

indeed lose their former use of being lights in a dark place; but they acquired a new use instead. They became what St Peter calls a surer word; that is, they became perhaps the strongest of the outward proofs, the most striking of the external testimonies to the truth of our Saviour's mission.

Do you ask, what makes their testimony so sure? St Peter tells us: their not being of private interpretation; and their having been spoken by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. They were not of *private* interpretation: that is, they did not refer merely to the events of the time and place when they were spoken; but they pointed far onward into futurity, and had a grander reference and application to the Son of God. Nor were the events which they pointed to so clear, that a man on reading the prophecy could say, "This means so and so; this will be fulfilled in such and such a manner." Even the prophet himself did not understand them. He spake as he was moved by the Spirit of God: he gave utterance to the threats and promises which God put into his mouth: but how those threats and promises were to be fulfilled, neither he nor his hearers knew. So that the prophecies were like a door with a curious lock or secret spring to it. Till the secret of the spring is found out, till the right key is given, we may puzzle ourselves as long as we please, but we shall

never open the door. Before the events took place, it was impossible to open the prophecies, so as to get clearly at their meaning. People contrived to peep through the chinks, and saw that the sight within was rich and glorious; and with that they were forced to be content. But when the events came and fitted the prophecies, just as the right key fits the lock, then the door was unfastened, and many of the prophecies were thrown open, and their meaning, so far as they spake of Jesus, was made manifest. I say, many of the prophecies were thrown open; because many are still closed. For the prophecies must not be compared to one room with one door, but to a great building with a number of rooms, each having its own door. Many of these rooms have been graciously thrown open to us: we have found them full of treasure: but others are still shut: we have not the right key to them; and perhaps we shall have to wait for it until the end of the world.

Be that as it may, our concern is, not with the prophecies which are closed and dark, but with those which are clear and open. Of these St Peter says, that they are very sure: in other words, they are strong and satisfactory proofs and testimonies to the truth and character of Christ's mission, testimonies which there is no de-

nying, and proofs which there ought to be no disputing. For just consider, if you saw half a dozen doors with as many different locks to them, so new and strange that not a smith in the country could make a key to fit any one of them, and if a man then came with a key, which fitted all these different locks, and opened all the six doors,—could you doubt that his was the right key? Could you doubt that the key had been made for the locks? Now this is just the kind of proof which the prophecies afford of the truth and divinity of Jesus. When the Jewish nation was musing what these prophecies could mean, our Saviour said, "Lo, I come, to do what is written of me in the volume of the book. I come to explain the prophecies, and to fulfill them." And so he did. The events of his life and the prophecies of the Old Testament fit and tally together so exactly and so wonderfully, in so many different points, that it is clear the agreement must have been designed,—designed by that God who first inspired the prophecies, and then sent his Son to fulfill them. This is a proof which it requires only good plain sense and an unprejudiced mind to judge of. It is a proof too which never wears out. It is just as sure now, as it was in St Peter's time; and it will continue to be no less sure for a thousand, or ten thousand years to come.

The weight of this proof rests on two simple facts. One is, that the prophecies were written many hundreds of years before the birth of Christ. Of this there can be no doubt; because the Jews, who are our Saviour's enemies, have always had the Scriptures of the Old Testament in their keeping. The other fact is, that Jesus died the death related in the New Testament. The plainest prophecies are those which describe, not our Lord's actions, but his passion, not his life, but the manner of his death, and his patience under it, not what he did, but what he suffered. Therefore the only question is, did Christ really suffer the death recorded in the Gospels? Of this again there can be no doubt. The Jews cannot deny, the heathens cannot deny, that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified as a malefactor by the Roman governor Pilate.

Here are two certain, undeniable facts. The date of the prophecies is quite certain: the death and sufferings of Jesus are also quite certain. Now let any unprejudiced man, bearing these two facts in mind, read the 22nd Psalm and the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, and then the account of our Saviour's trial and crucifixion in the four Gospels; and he must needs satisfy himself that David and Isaiah must have been moved by the Spirit of God, when they spoke of Christ ages before his birth, almost in the very words they would have used if they

had been eyewitnesses of his death, and had written after the event, instead of hundreds of years before it. For we all know,—the plainest man knows just as well as the most learned,—that such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for mortal man; he cannot attain to it. It is not within the powers of man to tell for certain even what a day may bring forth: but to see the future, to speak of it as if it were lying before our eyes, to describe what is to happen upon earth ages after we have mouldered in our coffins, what man can pretend to a power of this kind? This is the prerogative of God. He, and he alone, can tell what is to happen: because he alone has the ordering of events, and calls them out of the womb of time, at the moment and in the manner that seems best to him. He alone can tell what will be: because he alone can command what shall be. Accordingly when God in Scripture is shewing the vanity and weakness of the heathen idols, he calls on them, if they are really gods, to prove themselves such by this very power of prophesying and foretelling. "Declare us things to come (he says to them), shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods" (Isaiah xli. 22). When we see a mortal man therefore possest of this divine power, and employing it, as the prophets of old did, to the glory of God,

can we doubt that he must have received this power as a gift from God himself? Can there be a doubt that the prophecies came not by the will of man, but that holy men of God must have spoken as they were moved by the Holy Ghost?

Thus far I have been explaining the nature of that proof and evidence from prophecy, which St Peter speaks of as so very sure. That you may better understand the matter, I will illustrate it by going through the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, to which I have already referred you, and comparing it with the accounts of our Saviour in the New Testament. For it is only by looking closely at this chapter, and taking it verse by verse, that you can discover how accurate the description, and consequently how perfect the proof is. This chapter is a continuation of the 52nd, in which the prophet speaks of the Lord's redeeming his people without money, of his comforting his people, and of his making bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations. It is after declaring these glorious promises, that Isaiah breaks out, in the first verse of the 53rd chapter, into that mournful question, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" In vain do I make you all these promises, says God; you will not believe them: in vain do I shew you my glorious arm; you shut

your eyes against it. Such is the first prophecy in this chapter: and was it not fulfilled? When Jesus came in the fulness of time, did not the Jews disbelieve and reject him? With an express reference to this prophecy, St John says, "Though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him; that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report?" (xii. 37, 38). In vain was the arm of the Lord made bare: in vain was the eternal Son of God revealed to his people. They shut their eyes against him, and would not acknowledge him.

Now how did this come to pass? Isaiah tells us in the second verse. "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." This is the reason why Jesus was rejected: because he came in a humble garb, with none of those outward marks of royalty, which the Jews were fondly looking for. Therefore, says Isaiah, they will reject him. Such is the second prophecy: and was not this too fulfilled? Did not Jesus come in the form of a servant, and make himself of no reputation? and is it not further true, that on this very account the Jews

turned a deaf ear to his preaching, and would not believe in him? Hear what St Mark says: "Many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given to him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary? and they were offended at him" (Mark vi. 2, 3).

Thus far the prophecy and the event agree exactly. Let us see what comes next. "He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." This is so undeniable, it is so certain from every page of the New Testament that Jesus was a man of sorrows, that he was afflicted with all the afflictions which can befall mortal man, sin, and those which spring from sin, alone excepted, —it is so certain that he was treated with the utmost scorn, that he was rejected by those whom he came to save, that he was cast out and driven from place to place, and lastly that the wicked cruelty of his murderers was embittered by their insolent brutal mockery,—all this is so certain, that there can be no necessity for me to enter into any details on this point.

But perhaps you will ask, how it happened that the Son of God came to us without form or come-

liness? how it happened that, when the arm of the Lord was revealed, it was not revealed in its power and glory, but in the humble shape of the Carpenter of Nazareth? If we look into this chapter of Isaiah, we shall see the reason in the 4th, 5th, and 6th verses. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." This, my brethren, is the reason of Christ's humiliation. For our sakes he went through all: that we might be healed, he suffered stripes: that we might be forgiven, he was bruised and wounded: sinless himself, he was made a sin-offering for us: he bore the punishment of the iniquity of all the sons of men. To the same effect is that verse in the 40th Psalm: "My sins have taken such hold on me, that I am not able to look up; they are more in number than the hairs of my head: and my strength hath failed me." Compare these prophecies with the account of the agony in the garden, where drops of bloody sweat fell from our Saviour s forehead: and then determine whether they too

have not been wholly fulfilled. When we cry to our Lord in the Litany to deliver us, you know we call upon him, among other things, "by his agony and bloody sweat;" thus reminding him of what he underwent for the sake of fallen man, and beseeching him to perfect the work he there began for us, that his grievous sufferings may not have been in vain. For whenever any one dies in his sins, Christ has suffered in vain, so far as that person is concerned. He might as well have staid in heaven, for any good his agony can do to the unrepenting sinner. Nay, better would it be for the stubborn, impenitent sinner, that Christ had never come at all. Better would it be for him, that there had been no agony, no cross, no sacrifice for sins, no offer of peace and pardon, than that the offer should be rejected, and the sacrifice slighted, and the cross and agony of the Son of God declared to him, without moving his soul to repentance. The word is sad; but it is most true. It would have been better for the sinner that Christ had never come, than that he should have come, and that the sinner should reject him. But to reject his offered pardon is to reject him; to reject his love is to reject him; to reject his doctrine is to reject him; to reject his laws is to reject him. Let not the sinner say, "I have no such wicked meaning. I have no

thought of disowning or rejecting Christ: I acknowledge him to be my Lord and Master.' Hold, sinner, and consider what you are saying. You have no thought of rejecting Christ? Beware then that you are not doing worse; beware that you are not mocking and insulting him. Remember the Roman soldiers. They even bowed their knees, and put a royal robe on him, and set a crown on his head: yet all this was only mockery; and the crown was a crown of thorns. Alas! the lip-service of the bold sinner is a worse mockery, and goes more to his heart; the sins of the believer are sharper thorns to him than any his crown was made of. They strike a bitterer wound, and pierce deeper. To come into Christ's presence, and say you believe in him, and afterward by your works to deny it,—is not this mockery? is not this downright insult? is it not ingratitude and treason against your benefactor and your King? That dreadful night of the agony was the night of the power of darkness. Among the temptations which the tempter then employed against Jesus, few can have been more cutting, than the thoughts of the multitudes of human beings to whom his Gospel would be preached in vain, to whom his sufferings would bring no healing, on whom his death would only draw down a greater weight of wrath and condemnation. Cannot you

conceive the tempter urging him with some such crafty words as these? "Why should you suffer all these things, thou well-meaning but mistaken Jesus? Think of the thousands who will never be the better for your death. Think of the thousands who will be the worse for your death. Think of all those who will be encouraged to sin on, by the trust that you have bought their pardon. Think of all those to whom your Gospel will bring, not life, but death,—not pardon, but condemnation,—not joy, but pains unutterable,—not heaven, but a blacker hell!" With such malicious thoughts may we conceive the Father of lies to have assailed Jesus in that hour of bitterness: and the woe is, there was some truth in them; and that truth wrought like the barb of a poisoned arrow: it made the thought stick in the heart of Jesus and rankle there. For undoubtedly the Gospel of Jesus Christ, when it is not a savour of life unto life, is a savour of death unto death. If men do not become better and happier by it, they become more wicked and wretcheder. If they do not become true Christians in heart and life, they become worse than heathens. Undoubtedly it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgement, than for a Christian dying a sinner.

This perhaps may have been the weight which

pressed the most heavily on the soul of the tender-hearted Jesus during his agony. Would God that, as these thoughts pressed on his mind, so they would press on ours! Would God, the thought of the great misery laid up for an unrepentant sinner, which shook and wrung the soul of Jesus, so that an angel was sent to comfort him,—would God, this same thought would shake and wring every living sinner, and haunt him day and night, and give him no respite, till he were frightened and driven out of his sins, and brought to lead a holy life! Bad as are the pains of an awakened conscience, a sleeping conscience is far worse. For you must awake sometime. If you do not come to yourself before you are put into the grave, you must after. Here it is only the smart of a wound, which, however painful, is sure to be cured, if you put the proper salve to it. After death the wound is incurable. The God of truth hath spoken it, of all that die in their wickedness: their worm shall never die. Anything but that, O Lord! anything but that for the souls thou hast committed to my charge! Rather let our sins lay hold upon us in this world, and press us down with shame and sorrow, that we may all turn to thee while thou art to be found, and may obtain forgiveness of the past, and the help of the blessed Comforter to heal us, and purify

us, and strengthen us for the time to come, that we may love thee and obey thee as we ought to do!

But let us return to Isaiah. Enough has been said to prove the fulfilment of the 4th, 5th, and 6th verses of the prophecy, which declare that the Messiah was to bear our griefs and to carry our sorrows, and that the Lord would lay on him the iniquity of us all. Now observe what comes next; for the prophecy grows more particular and remarkable as it goes on. The next verses, as rendered by the learned Bishop Lowth, are as follows. "It was exacted, and he was made answerable, and he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. By an oppressive judgement he was taken off; and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he smitten." In these verses we are told, first, that the Messiah, the promised Christ, was to be made answerable for a sum that was required; secondly, that he was to be taken off by an oppressive or unjust sentence; thirdly, that he was dumb and patient before his judges; fourthly, that he was to be brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and to be cut off for the sins of God's people. Here are four very extraordinary assertions; yet they are all fulfilled in Jesus.

In the first place, he was made answerable; for what? Isaiah does not tell us. He only says, "it was exacted." Look into St Paul however, and you will find what was exacted. The ransom of the world,—the price of our salvation. For this was Jesus made answerable. It was exacted from him; and he paid it to the uttermost, with the treasure of his most precious blood. For this reason St Paul admonishes us that we may not do as we please with ourselves; for that "we are not our own, but Christ's," seeing that "we are bought with a price" (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20).

The second thing foretold of the Messiah in these two verses is, that he was to be taken off by an oppressive or unjust sentence. Can anything be truer? Could Isaiah have exprest himself more accurately, if he had written after the crucifixion? Was not the sentence against Jesus utterly oppressive and unjust? What did Pilate say, before he gave him up to be executed? "I find no fault in him:" so we learn from St Luke, and St John: "I am innocent of the blood of this just person:" so we read in St Matthew. Here the judge himself, at the very moment when he is delivering Jesus up to a most shameful and bitter death, declares the injustice of his own sentence, the cruelty of his own conduct.

The third thing prophesied of the Messiah in

these two verses is, that he was to be dumb and patient before his judges. Now this is not usual, not likely, not natural. Innocent men do not commonly submit to a lawless and cruel sentence, without doing their best to defend themselves, and trying to clear their characters at least, if not to save their lives. Yet this too was fulfilled in the trial of Jesus, as exactly as all the rest. We read in St Matthew, that, when the council brought false witnesses against Jesus, that they might have something to lay to his charge, Jesus "held his peace;" not from pride and stubbornness of spirit, but, as he himself tells us (Luke xxii. 67, 68), because he knew that, if he told them the truth, they would not believe him, and that if he asked them questions, or tried to argue with them out of the Scriptures, they would neither answer him, nor let him go. It was not until the high-priest adjured him by the living God, to tell them whether he was the Christ, that Jesus made that noble answer, of which it is hard to say whether we ought most to admire its mildness or its courage: "Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. xxvi. 64). It was written in the book of Daniel, that one like the Son of man should come in the clouds of heaven. The

Jewish priests therefore were bound to believe that such a sight would one day be vouchsafed to them. Had they cared for justice, they would have given Jesus an opportunity of justifying himself, by asking what proof he could offer of his being the Son of man. Then might he have appealed to his mighty works. There would have been no want of witnesses. Blind Bartimeus restored to sight, the centurion's servant raised from the bed of sickness, the impotent man released by a few words from the infirmity which had crippled him for thirty-eight years; above all, Lazarus raised out of the grave, after he had been four days dead. Here would have been proofs of divine power so manifest, that, though they would not have convinced or converted his enemies, they might perhaps have shamed them into silence. But no: the judges give him no such opportunity of proving his mission. They stop him with the cry, "He has spoken blasphemy!" they condemn him to die, and send him bound to Pilate. Here the same scene of silence is repeated, "When he was accused by the chief priests, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate to him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him to never a word, insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly." In St John indeed we read of his speaking more than once to Pilate;

but that was in private, and apparently not for his own sake, but for Pilate's. Against the public accusations of his countrymen he made no more answer or defense before Pilate, than he had made before the priests. Thus dumb was Jesus, as Isaiah prophesied he was to be. And was he not also patient? He who, when Peter had denied him thrice, only looked upon him; he who, when he was suffering all the tortures of the cross, prayed to his Father for his murderers.

The fourth thing mentioned in these two verses is, that he was to be brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and to be cut off for the sins of God's people. Hear what St Peter says: "He did no sin; neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, but committed his cause to him that judgeth righteously; who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. ii. 22, 23). But why is it said that he was to be brought as a *lamb* to the slaughter? At first sight this might seem to refer only to his innocence and his meekness. But the expression has a further and a deeper meaning. "Behold the Lamb of God," said John the Baptist of him, "which taketh away the sin of the world!" In this sense, above all others, is Jesus the Lamb. He is the Lamb ordained to death from the foundation of the world. As it is beautifully

exprest in the Communion Service, he is the very paschal Lamb, which was offered for us, and hath taken away the sin of the world. It is as being a sacrifice, no less than for his purity, that Jesus is likened by Isaiah to a lamb. He was, what the law of Moses required the paschal lamb to be, without blemish.

The next agreement is perhaps still more marvellous. "And his grave was permitted with the wicked," says Isaiah, "and with the rich man was his *tomb*." For that is the true translation, and not, as our Bible has it, "in his death." Here again the prophecy could scarcely be more accurate, if it had been written after the event. For Jesus did indeed go down to the grave with the wicked; or, as the last verse of the chapter expresses it, "he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors." He died as a criminal between two thieves. But where did he afterward find a tomb? Not with the transgressors, not with the wicked; but, O wonderful fulfilment of a most strange prophecy!—"when the evening was come" (these are St Matthew's words), "there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus disciple; he went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock." Thus was

this prophecy accomplished to the letter: thus did Jesus, after dying with the transgressors, receive a tomb with the rich.

Isaiah then, as if for fear of being misunderstood,—for fear any one should imagine that the wonderful person, of whom he has been speaking throughout the chapter, had done something worthy of death, and deserved to be counted as a transgressor,—repeats himself, and again declares that all this befell him, though he had done no wrong, neither was there guile found in his mouth; because it "pleased Jehovah to crush him with affliction." Was God unjust or unmerciful in this? Far, far from it. For, as the prophet gives us to understand in the very next words, it was done with the Messiah's own consent. The words, when rightly translated, are as follows: "When his soul shall make an offering for sin." It was the Messiah's soul or life then, that is, the Messiah himself, that was to make this offering. Was not this too accomplished? was not Jesus willing to die for mankind? Hear his own words: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life for the sheep. No man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself." God then was not unjust in emptying the vial of his wrath upon Jesus; nor was he unmerciful in doing so. On the contrary it was the greatest act of mercy that could

be. For why did Jesus die? For our sakes. The punishment which was due to us, he vouchsafed to take upon himself; and so, through the voluntary sin-offering of this one holy victim, thousands upon thousands have been made righteous, have been forgiven, have been purified from their offenses, and raised to everlasting life.

Nor was the Messiah himself a loser by his sufferings, and by his wondrous love, as Isaiah plainly declares in the last three verses of our chapter, which in Bishop Lowth's translation stand thus. "When his soul shall make an offering for sin, he shall see a seed which shall prolong their days, and the gracious purpose of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Of the travail of his soul he shall see the fruit, and shall be satisfied. By the knowledge of him shall my righteous servant justify many; for the punishment of their iniquities shall he bear. Therefore will I distribute to him the many for his portion; and the mighty people shall he share for his spoil; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors, and bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." The time will not allow me to go minutely into the fulfilment of these last three verses: nor is it needful; for you yourselves see their fulfilment. Has not God the Father highly exalted Jesus, that at

his name millions of knees have bowed this very day? Does not Christ see a seed which shall prolong their days far beyond the grave? Has not God's gracious purpose prospered in his hand? It has, it has. Bear witness, ye multitudes in every age, who have been weaned from sin by the doctrines of the blessed Jesus. Bear witness, ye innumerable servants of his, who have felt and declared that ye were reconciled to God through the blood of his dear Son,—declared it, not with your lips alone,—O no! ye have declared it by your lives, by your holiness, by your humility, by your patience, by your diligence in every good work, by that inward peace of heart and conscience, which the world can neither give nor take away. By these proofs have ye shewn in all ages, ye servants of the holy Jesus, that the promise of the prophet has been gloriously fulfilled, that the gracious purpose of the God of heaven has indeed prospered in the hands of his Messiah. For what is that purpose, dearly beloved brethren? St Paul tells us in half a dozen words: "The will of God is your sanctification." His gracious purpose in sending his Son into the world was to bring back the children of men to their duty and allegiance. When they are persuaded to come to him that he may give them life, then is the will of God accomplished, and his gracious purpose pros-

perously fulfilled. My brethren, will you not do your parts to fulfill God's gracious purpose? The Father is willing and ready; the Holy Ghost is willing and ready: Christ has done his part. The price is paid: the iniquity has been borne: the door of reconciliation here, and of heaven after death, has been thrown wide open to you. Will you not do your parts? Will you not come and take the life, which Jesus has bought for you with so much suffering? Will you not return to God?

Thus have we examined this prophecy of Isaiah verse by verse. We have seen every part of it fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Such an agreement, so accurate, so wonderful, in so many points, cannot possibly be accidental. Therefore in Jesus we have the true key for the prophetic lock: and Isaiah, who foretold all these things so many hundred years before, must assuredly have spoken, as St Peter says, not of his own will, but as he was moved by the Holy Ghost.

SERMON V.

PRINCIPLES ABOVE RULES;

OR,

WHEAT IS BETTER THAN BREAD.

COLOSSIANS ii. 20.

If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?

THE ordinances here spoken of are the ordinances of the law of Moses, which were only designed for a certain people, and for a certain time. They were designed for the Jewish people,—for that people out of which in the fulness of time the Saviour of the world was to spring: and they were designed to hold that people together, and to keep the expectation of the Saviour alive in it, until the Saviour himself came, to fulfill the law, and by fulfilling it to prepare the way for the downfall of all such parts of it as had merely been intended

for their particular nation and age. Now this is a point in which there is a great and striking difference between the law of Moses and the law of the Gospel. One of the chief excellences of the precepts which we find in the New Testament, is, that they reach far beyond the occasions and purposes they were originally laid down for; so that, in spite of all the changes which have taken place in the world since, they are many of them applicable to the letter, and all are still applicable in their spirit, at this very day. If you bear in mind that near eighteen hundred years have gone by since the apostles wrote those letters to the christian churches of their age, which we are wont to call Epistles, you will join with me in wondering, not that there should be a few sayings here and there in them dark and hard to be understood, but that there should be such a vast number of verses in them, every word of which we may still apply to ourselves, to the purifying of our hearts, and the building up of our souls, and the shaping of our lives.

Now to what is this excellence owing? In other words, what is the peculiar character of the precepts laid down in the New Testament, in consequence of which they do not pass away, like the ordinances of the law of Moses, but spread from land to land, and are handed down from genera-

tion to generation, and, wherever the Gospel is known, serve as a guide of life and practice to all classes and conditions of mankind? Their peculiar character is, that the apostles, doing as their Master had done before them, when they gave a rule for what was to be done in any case or on any occasion, were not satisfied with giving the bare rule, but to the rule added the principle, which was the ground of its wholesomeness and worth. Now between a mere rule, which is the applying of a principle to some particular case, and the principle itself, there is just the same sort of difference as between bread and wheat. Let me beg you to attend to this comparison, on which I mean to dwell for a while, as I hope by the help of it to render an important truth clear and almost easy to you.

A rule, which has been drawn up for any particular purpose, may be likened to a loaf of bread: a principle on the other hand is like a handful of wheat. Every rule that is worth anything must be taken from a principle, just as a loaf of bread is made of wheat. For the wants and uses of the moment a rule is more serviceable than a principle; just as, when a man is hungry, bread is more welcome than wheat. For bread is wheat ready prepared for the sake of satisfying hunger: we have only to take and eat it. Hence for a hungry man

a crust of bread is better and handier than so much unground wheat. Yet will anybody say on this account that bread is a better thing than wheat? Suppose a man were going to some far country, where no corn grows, which would he take with him? bread, or wheat? Suppose a sailor were thrown with his family on a desert island, which would he wish for? for bread, or for wheat? Assuredly a single handful of wheat would be a greater godsend to the poor castaway than a whole shipload of bread. Why so? Because he could plant the wheat, and could not plant the bread. The bread after a time would get mouldy and be spoilt. The wheat, if it were sown, and proper care were taken of it, would grow, and flourish, and spread, until large fields were covered with it: and generation after generation might be fed with the produce of the single handful.

This is the great advantage which wheat has over bread. Bread may feed us for the moment; but, when once eaten, it is gone for ever. Wheat on the contrary will bear seed: it will increase and multiply: after one crop has had its day, and been reaped, and stored in the barn, and consumed, another crop, provided seed be preserved, will spring up: and so long as the earth itself lasts, so long will corn last also. Thus too is it with rules

and principles. A rule is like a loaf of bread. It is a ready, handy application of a principle, a principle made up for immediate use. By rules we govern or rule children. We say to them, "Do this," or, "Don't do that:" because it is easy for them to understand a plain order; but it is not always easy to make them understand the principle or reason of it. When the child however comes to be a man, he puts away childish things. He wants a new set of rules adapted to his new state: for the rules of childhood he has outgrown, so that they no longer fit him. The rules which belong to one stage of life, are many of them ill-suited to other stages of life. In like manner the rules which belong to one class of men, or to one people, or to one age of the world, may not suit another class of men, or another people, or another age of the world. Hence different ages and different nations require different rules. To take an instance, the rule, or ordinance, or rite of circumcision, which St Paul talks so much about, was suited to the nonage of religion: accordingly God appointed it as a rule or ordinance to be observed by the Jews, who were living, so to say, in the infancy and childhood of religion. But when religion came of age, when by the blessing of Jesus Christ it reached its full growth and stature, it threw away circumcision as a badge of its childhood.

Now if every age of the world, and every people, and every class and order in society, and every stage of life, requires each its own rules, and if the rule which suits one will not suit another, how was God ever to give mankind rules enough to live by? What book is large enough to hold the countless swarms of them that would be wanted? Supposing that such a book had been written, it would have taken men their whole lives to read and learn it. What a hard matter too would it have been to pick out the rule needed for every particular occasion! The time for acting would have gone by, while we were making out what it behoved us to do. Therefore God, when he was graciously pleased to give us a law which was to serve, not for one country and one people, but for the whole world, did not give us an endless string of rules to be followed according to the letter in each particular case, but gave us the principles which are the ground and sources of all rules, and from which the rules are to be drawn. Even as for the nourishment of our bodies he has not given us bread, but wheat, leaving it for us to sow the wheat, and, when it has come up, to reap it, and to thresh it, and to grind it, and to bake it into bread, or cakes, or what we please; in like manner for the strengthening of our souls has he set before us what is good

and right, not for one man more than another man, or for one country more than another country, or for one age more than another age, but for all men, in all countries, and in all ages: and having given us thus much, having given us the seeds of all rules, he has left us in great measure to grow the rules for ourselves; he has left us to apply the principles to particular cases, and so draw the rules for each case out of them. Thus, when he did away the ordinance of circumcision, at the very time when he took away the rule, he vouchsafed to give us the principle of that rule in its stead. When he abolished the rite by his apostle St Paul, he declared the meaning of the rite: he told us that the thing signified was the circumcision or purifying of the heart: and having thus shewn us this great and high principle,—a principle which concerns all mankind, and will concern them all until the end of the world, since all men have hearts to purify, and hearts that greatly need to be purified,—he has left it to the judgement and conscience of each of us to apply the principle to his own wants, and to frame rules for himself accordingly. Do we find that we cannot purge ourselves from carnal thoughts and desires, save by a strict course of abstinence and fasting? We are bound to circumcise our hearts by abstinence, and to lay down rules

for our fasting. Do we find that amusements and going into company nourish the proud flesh within us, and fill us with vain and idle imaginations? We must circumcise our hearts by retirement, and must bind ourselves by rules to keep away from places of amusement. I say, we must bind ourselves; for in neither of these cases has God bound us. In all such matters he has left his people free. He has not said, like the Pharisees of old, Thou shalt fast so many times a week. He has not said, Thou shalt never go to a fair, or a merrymaking, or a cricket-match. But he has laid down the great principles, he has declared the all-embracing truths, that the poor in spirit shall inherit his kingdom, and that the pure in heart shall see him: and he has left each person to make out the bearings of these principles on his own case, and to seek these blessings of humility and purity by such methods, and according to such rules, as may be deemed best and safest, either by the man himself, or by the church he is a member of. For the Church of each age and nation is bound in all such matters to help and guide its members in the interpretation and application of the principles laid down in Scripture to their own particular need: and it is much to be regretted that the practice of the Church of England in these latter times has been to leave people almost entirely to their own

unassisted discretion. I cannot but think that it would be a very happy thing, especially for the poor and ignorant, if a little of the godly discipline, which prevailed in the primitive Church, could be restored.

What has been observed of circumcision might be extended pretty nearly to the whole Jewish law, as compared with the excellency of our more spiritual religion. Moses, who had to provide for the wants of a particular people, at a time when religion, as I said above, was only in its childhood, was instructed to treat them as we treat children, and to give them rules: "Touch not, taste not, handle not." These rules St Paul in the text calls "the rudiments of the world," thus likening them to the rudiments or elements of knowledge, as it were, to the alphabet, which children have to begin with, in order that they may learn to read, and get a footing in the land of knowledge. Jesus Christ on the other hand, the Word and the Wisdom of the Most High, who came to establish religion in the fulness of its strength, and to furnish it with all such good gifts as its riper age required,—Jesus Christ, who spake for all men, for all nations, for all ages,—did not lay down rules, like Moses,—did not say, "Touch not, taste not, handle not." No: by an exertion of his power and wisdom more marvellous

to a thinking mind than any, even the greatest miracle he ever wrought, he at once, by a few plain words, set religion free from all her former swaddling-clothes and leading-strings: he skimmed off the cream, as it were, of the law of Moses: in the room of burthensome rites and formal rules, he gave us the law of faith and love, and thereby made his doctrine a doctrine of principles, living, active, pure, universal, and eternal.

Somebody however may perhaps ask me, What is the worth of these principles, unless they bring forth good lives? You might just as well ask me, What is the worth of seed-corn, unless it brings forth wheat, and flour, and bread? Good seed, if it be duly sown, and the care of the husbandman is not wanting, must, under God's blessing, bring forth a good crop of wheat, some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, some a hundredfold. In like manner good principles, if they are planted in a heart that has been duly ploughed and weeded, must bring forth good deeds, some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some a hundredfold. The only difference is, that God's blessing is sometimes denied to the grower of the corn: to him God now and then sends a bad season, for a trial, it may be, of his patience, or to make him feel that he is wholly dependent upon Him who is the Lord of the harvest, and the Giver of all good things. But

to the diligent grower of good principles, to the man who is anxious to raise up the goodly plants of faith and love in his heart, God's blessing is never denied. His crop is sure not to fail. Sooner or later it will spring up abundantly in a rich harvest of good works. Of this we may be sure; for our Lord himself tells us so. Every good tree, these are his words, bringeth forth good fruit.

But why, if this be so, do I lay so much stress on the principles, and not rather speak to you of the good works which are to come from them? Because, in the first place, the works without the principles are worth nothing. It is the motive, as we all know, that more than anything else renders an action good or bad. However fair the look of an action may be, if the right motive is wanting, the action is hollow: if the motive be a bad one, the action is rotten at the core. Who cares for an outward seeming or show of friendship or affection, unless the heart be also friendly and affectionate? Who does not prize a rough outside, when it covers an honest inside, more than the most fawning fondness from a heart that is cold and false? Thus it is right to insist on the principles for their own sake; because the principles give their value to the action, not the action to the principles. The principles are the gold on which the stamp is to be put: if the gold be not

good, the stamp, though it may often deceive people, gives it no real worth; and he who graves the king's image on base metal, is sent to the gallows for forgery.

But further, it is right to enforce the principle rather than the action, because a good principle, as we have seen, is sure of producing good actions; whereas good actions, that is, actions which wear the outward show of goodness, are by no means sure of producing or fostering good principles. Take for example the giving of alms. There can be no doubt that he who loves his neighbour as himself for Christ's sake, will relieve his wants: therefore there can be no doubt that, wherever there is christian love or charity, it must needs produce the giving of alms, and every other bountiful work. But is it equally certain that christian love will grow out of giving to the poor? Does not the Gospel tell us of the hypocrites who did their alms in the streets, to be seen of men? Can you think that a person who gave alms from such a corrupt, selfish motive, would be made better by what he did? Can you think that it would render him more bountiful, more compassionate, more affectionate? We know the contrary. We know that the more a man indulges any evil propensity, the more he falls under its sway, and the worse he becomes. If he indulges his vanity and selfish-

ness, he is sure to become vainer and more selfish. Nor is it too much to say, that every action of seeming goodness, which does not flow from a sincere and honest heart, is so far from helping to make a man better, that it tends directly to make him still more the child of the devil and the slave of sin than he was before.

Be not deceived then, my brethren, by the idle talk, which the ungodly are wont to set up, that goodness, which from such lips means the mere outward show of what the world deems to be good, is better than religion; and that the only thing of importance is to teach children to do right, without caring about bringing them up in the fear and love of God. That goodness is better than religion, I will believe, when any man has convinced me that the rind of an orange is better than the whole orange. That teaching children to be honest, sober, and industrious, is better than bringing them up in christian holiness, I will not believe, until I have seen it proved that it is better to sow bread than to sow wheat. Make the bread; and take care that your children make the bread. Be careful that you yourselves keep, be careful to make them keep, every wholesome rule for the conduct of life: teach them to walk in all the ordinances of the moral law blameless: teach them to do their duty, regularly, faithfully, exactly. Set

them the example of industry, of sobriety, of honesty; and do your best to lead them to follow it. But sow the wheat, as you value your own souls, and theirs. Lose no opportunity, from the cradle upward, of teaching them to fear and to love God. Speak to them of God, of his power, of his purity, of his fatherly goodness: speak to them of Christ, and of his exceeding love in dying for us sinners: speak to them of the Holy Ghost, and bid them pray to him for comfort and help. Do this; and God, you may trust, will do the rest. He will take charge of the seed which you have dutifully sown. He will send down the dew of his Spirit upon it. The seed will grow up and prosper, and will blossom to everlasting life.

SERMON VI.

PRAY WITH THE SPIRIT.

1 Cor. xiv. 15.

I will pray with the spirit; and I will pray with the understanding also.

Among the evil customs which had crept into the Church of Corinth, one was that some of the teachers, or ministers, were wont to disturb the congregation by preaching and praying to them in a foreign language, which most of them could not understand; thus misemploying and abusing their gifts, for the sake of making their hearers stare, and of feeding their own vanity. The folly and mischief of such a practice is plain enough. What would you think of me, if I had been reading prayers to you in Latin this morning, or were to begin preaching to you in French? What could you be the better for the prayers? or what the wiser for the sermon? Now this is just what St

Paul is reproving in the chapter from which the text is taken. He sets forth the uselessness of speaking to a congregation in a language they are ignorant of. If any man pray, he says, in an unknown or foreign tongue, his spirit indeed prayeth, but his understanding is unfruitful: that is to say, his soul, or spirit may pray; but his meaning will be hidden from his hearers; and his words, not being understood by them, will yield them no fruit. Then comes the text, "What is it then?" or, what ought we to do then? "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also." In other words, when we assemble together for the worship of God, the ministers are not to pray with the spirit, or soul only, for their own edification and improvement; but every minister ought so to pray, that the people may understand him, and that even the most unlearned, knowing what is asked for, may be able, as we read in the next verse, to say *amen* from the heart, at the end of each petition.

This is the strict and primary meaning of the text, the meaning which, if we consider the circumstances of the case, St Paul had chiefly in view, when he wrote this part of his epistle. His purpose was to reprove and correct the extravagant conceit of the prayer-utterers, whose vanity led them to pray before the people in a language

nobody could understand. Since those times however things are changed, and in this respect happily for the better. No one can now get up in one of our churches, and disturb the congregation by praying in an unknown or foreign tongue. We have a form of sound words given us in the Prayerbook, which every minister of the Church of England is bound to keep to, and which every minister does keep to from one end of the kingdom to the other. Go where you will, into whatever church you will, in London, in any country town, in any village, in the most out-of-the-way hamlet, you will everywhere hear the same morning service in the morning, the same evening service in the evening: you will hear the same Psalms, the same Lessons, the same thanksgivings, the same prayers. In the furthest corners of England, in Wales, in Ireland, nay, even in the East and West Indies, wherever the brethren of our Church meet together to worship God, you would hear the same wise and sober and hearty and pious and truly christian praises and petitions, which you have been used to in this place from your childhood.

What shall we say then? Shall we flatter ourselves that the command in the text,—for such we may deem it,—to pray with the spirit, and to pray also with the understanding, cannot apply to us?

Shall we fancy that it belongs only to a state of things which has gone by, that it is out of date, and that we have no concern with it? My brethren, the truths of the Bible can never be out of date. The state of things, which led Jesus and his apostles to set forth certain principles, will of course change; for everything earthly does: but a new state of things arises in its room, on which the same principles bear. The true Christian therefore, feeling that the principles delivered in the New Testament are a solemn trust, which he is to use to the best of his judgement, according to the circumstances he is placed in, will not be satisfied with learning how St Paul applied a principle in the times wherein he lived, but will rather ask himself, how would St Paul have applied the same principle now, if he had been living in these days? For that is the point which concerns us. What was meant by praying with the spirit and with the understanding eighteen hundred years ago, is in great measure a question of curiosity. But how to pray with the spirit and with the understanding now, is a question of plain practice. For surely no one will imagine that it is of less consequence for us, than it was for the first Christians, to employ our minds and our hearts, as well as our tongues, in God's service. No one who knows anything of the New Testament, can fancy

it possible for us to serve God acceptably, unless we worship him in spirit and in truth, and serve him with a reasonable service. Nay, even before the coming of Christ, it was the same. Thus we read at the beginning of the 103rd Psalm, "Praise the Lord, O my soul!"—not my tongue, or my voice, but *my soul:* here you have David praying with the spirit:—and what comes next? "And all that is within me praise his holy name." You see, according to David, a man should praise God with *all* that is within him. Is his understanding within him? He ought to praise God with his understanding. Is his memory within him? He ought to praise God with his memory, by remembering all his benefits. In a word, whatever powers of mind and heart and soul he may be gifted with, David in the 103rd Psalm, and in many other places besides, teaches him to exert them all, when he is praising, and of course also when he is praying to God. But if this was the duty of God's faithful servants even before Christ's coming, how much more must it be so now that Christ is come, and has set us free from the yoke of rites and ceremonies, and, instead of all those burthensome sacrifices and observances, which pressed so heavily on the Jews of old, requires nothing of us save that we should worship God in spirit and in truth, and serve him with a reasonable service.

What, I say, is the change which has taken place in the application of St Paul's principle, that men should pray with the spirit, and also with the understanding, to the present state of our Church? The main change is this. When St Paul wrote the words, he addressed them to the prayer-utterers, to warn them against uttering prayers which the people did not understand. That fault has been corrected in the simplest manner, by doing away prayer-utterers, and establishing prayer-readers. Instead of persons getting up and praying without book, as it is called, which was the practice in early times, and led, as we have seen, to great abuses, our Church in its wisdom, has appointed regular forms of prayer, which are to be read out of the Prayer-book, so that the people may bear a part in the service, if they will only attend to it. St Paul's words therefore are now addrest not to the prayer-utterers, who in our Church are not to be found, but mainly to the prayer-hearers, that is, to you. It is to yourselves that you are to apply the command to pray both with the spirit and with the understanding: for it is to you that St Paul himself would mainly apply it, were he to come to life again and preach on it.

In the first place you should pray with the spirit: that is, you should feel what you say, and should

wish for what you ask. If you do not, your prayers will be a mere pretence. When you pray to God to pardon your sins for instance, it is clear that you acknowledge yourselves to have sinned in such a way as to need pardon. Else why do you ask it? Does any one ask for what he does not want? Praying too is more than common asking. Praying is asking earnestly as we do when we greatly desire what we ask for. Do we then, when we pray for God's forgiveness, beg hard for it, as for some boon that we really long for? If we do not,—and alas! how few do!—we cannot be said to pray with the spirit.

But you may ask me, how is a man to get to feel such a longing for God's forgiveness, as shall make him pray for it with his heart, or with his spirit, as well as with his tongue? Some of you may be tempted to say within yourselves: "It is not my fault that I do not feel all this: I have tried to do so, and cannot." To such a man I answer, I believe it, I believe it fully. Nothing is more certain than that we cannot of ourselves call up spiritual feelings in our hearts at pleasure. Man in his natural unassisted state, man without the help of the Holy Ghost, cannot love the things of God. St Paul's language on this point is clear and positive: and even if he had never written a word about the matter, one could hardly look

round the world, one could not look into one's own heart, and not perceive, that it is not natural for man to love the things of God. Many of God's laws we can keep naturally, or at least with no more than the ordinary and scant measure of divine grace, which must have been vouchsafed even to the heathens. For example, the light of conscience and the checks of laws and education are enough to hold most men back from the grosser offenses against their neighbours, such as murder and adultery. Again, a man may be induced to eschew certain vices, by observing their evil consequences in this world. He may see that brawls abroad and sickness at home often follow after strong drink, and for this reason may shun drunkenness. In like manner he may be led to thrift and industry, by noticing how surely waste and sloth bring a man to rags and hunger. Or he may be rendered cleanly and regular by remarking the discomforts and troubles of dirt, untidiness, and disorder. Further, a man, without being a Christian, may do many kind and praiseworthy actions, out of a regard for public opinion,—from the principles to be met with even in such books as have no concern with religion,—or through an easy, cheerful temper, and a compassionate heart. To this pitch of excellence, we often see, an irreligious man may attain. And what does it amount to? To

harmlessness, which is the virtue of the sheep; to industry, which is the virtue of the ant; to prudence, which is the virtue of the bee; to friendliness and generosity, strong traces of which may be found in the half-human dog. I do not say that there may not now and then be an example of an irreligious man rising beyond this, and devoting himself to the service of his fellow-creatures out of what seems to be pure love. But, generally speaking, the virtues of the irreligious are only animal virtues. They are only excellences which belong to man as an observing and social animal: the proof of which is, that even the beasts that perish share them with him. Mind, I am not saying that thrift and industry and friendliness are not good qualities. They are good, they are excellent qualities; and nobody can be a true Christian without them. But, excellent as they are, they are not spiritual qualities, and, when standing by themselves, can no more make a Christian, than wood without sails can make a ship. A plank of wood, you know, will float of itself, and, if large enough, will bear up a man who lays hold on it. So a person having those animal good qualities, which lie within the reach of the natural man, will float on the tide of this world, and, as the phrase is, will keep his head above water. But would you prepare for the voyage which you must all under-

take? would you speed toward the haven where we shall all one day wish to be? Mere wood will not serve: you must get sails. To the virtues of this world you must add the feelings of another world. To the animal good qualities, which, as animals, we have in common with the gentler and more social of the brutes, you must add those spiritual graces which raise man to a brotherhood with the angels. This is the one thing especially needful; which yet no man can do for himself. No man can say, "I will love God." No man can say, "I will grieve for having offended God by my coldness and negligence in his service." These feelings are no longer natural to us: we lost them at the Fall; and ever since a man can no more bid them spring up in his heart, than the hull of a ship can fit itself out for sea, and wing itself with sails for starting.

But, if we are commanded to pray with the spirit, and yet so to pray is not natural to man, surely we are in evil case, and God has dealt hardly with us, in requiring a duty which it does not rest with us to pay. Not so, my brethren. God is no such hard taskmaster. All that he demands of his servants is, that they give him back his gifts with increase. Though no one can say of himself, "I will pray with the spirit," every one can say, "I will pray to God so to change my heart,

that I may have the heart to pray to him:" and God has promised his Spirit to them that ask him. "I will pour," he says, by the mouth of his prophet Zechariah (xii. 10), "upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem,—that is, on all true members of Christ's Church,—the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced,—that is, on Christ whom we have hurt and pierced by our sins;—and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." No promise can be more express or plainer; and its parts follow one another in a most instructive order. First we have the spirit of grace and supplication poured on us; for without that we can do nothing. The next step is, that the spirit thus given to us leads us to look on Christ whom we have pierced. In other words, we are moved to think much and often of all that Jesus Christ suffered on the cross; and then, when our minds are thus filled with pity and horrour, to look within and call to mind that it was for our transgressions, lightly as we deem of them, that he was wounded, and that, if he was bruised and smitten and afflicted, it was for our iniquities and sins. The habit thus wrought in us of looking at sin in connexion with the cross of Christ, as the

true cause of all his sufferings, and as the curse which he bore for us on the tree,—this habit is fitted to set the guilt and hatefulness of disobeying God in the clearest and strongest light, and is of all ways the likeliest to work on our hearts. Therefore it is not surprising that the prophecy, after telling us that we shall look on him whom we have pierced, should go on to promise that we shall mourn for him with bitter mourning. For, though the love of God is not natural to man, pity and compassion and gratitude are. These sparks of our original brightness, these roots and stumps, if I may so call them, from the land of Eden, we all bear about us more or less. It is natural to grieve for the loss of a dear and kind friend: and if he died a violent, a bloody, a painful death,—if he never did anything to draw down such a death on himself,—if he bore his sufferings patiently and meekly,—all this is sure to swell our grief.

Suppose however that it was for us, and in our defense, that our dear kind friend met his death; suppose that we were traveling together, and that the villains aimed the blow at us, but our friend stept between and caught it, and saved our life by sacrificing his own,—would not this add tenfold to our grief and love for him? Must I go on still further? When we saw him struck down, instead of standing by him, and fighting a

little for him, who had just given his life for us,—how shall I speak of such shameful cowardice!—we took fright, we ran away, and left him to die. We meant indeed to alarm the neighbourhood: we vowed within ourselves that we would come back very shortly with all the men we could muster, to seize and punish the murderers. But one of them for fear of this took a purse from our friend's pocket, and threw us a few pieces of gold. Some of his blood flowed that way, and there was a red spot upon one of them: but what of that? We had a bill to make up; winter was coming, when work is scarce: seizing the thieves could not bring our friend to life again: so we turned back and picked up the gold, and went halves with the murderers of our preserver. Now I would ask you, when the poor wretches who had been guilty of such cowardice, such baseness, such treachery, such ingratitude, came to themselves, would they not mourn? Unless their consciences were utterly seared, surely they must mourn bitterly.

Such, or something like it, is the way in which the Holy Spirit brings us to mourn for sin. He places Jesus Christ before us hanging on the cross: he points out his hands, his feet, his wounded side, and then cries to us, "This is thy doing." Should we deny the charge,—as most of us would,

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protesting that we had no hand in the deed, that we have always hated it, that from the bottom of our souls we abhor the wicked Jews, who crucified our Lord and Master,—the Holy Spirit sets before us some such parable as I have been telling you, and then stops our mouth with three short questions. The first question is, "Did not Christ die for you? and must not the curse due to sin have fallen on each of you, if Jesus had not stept between, and shielded and saved you by giving his life for yours?" To this there can be but one answer: for St Paul says plainly (Gal. iii. 13), "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,"—by the law, the law of justice, we are all accursed,—"being made a curse for us." The second question is, "Who were the real murderers of Jesus Christ?" To this again there can be but one answer: the sins of men, on account of which he died, and the devil, who bribed Judas Iscariot to betray him. The third and last question is, "Have you, since you were taught these things in your childhood, ever been wilfully guilty of any act of sin? have you ever taken a bribe from the devil, in the shape of some unlawful pleasure, some forbidden gain, or some angry, spiteful, or envious feeling harboured and cherished against your neighbour? Have you ever in these or any other ways taken the devil's wages to do

his work, instead of fighting against him, as you ought always to be doing, beside the cross of your crucified Redeemer?" This is the third and last question: and to this also only one answer can be given. We have all of us, every child of Adam has, more or less, parlied and made truce with the arch-enemy of his Saviour. Most too at some time or other have entered into his service, at least for a season, by indulging in some known sin: and so the price of blood,—the blood of our greatest friend, or our chiefest benefactor, of our only Saviour,—the price of the blood of the Son of God is on our souls. In this manner does the Holy Ghost convince men of sin, and bring them to mourn for their past conduct, and prove himself to be the Spirit of supplication, by stirring us to supplicate heartily for pardon. If you then at any time feel a contented coldness creep over your souls, beware of it, as of a drowsiness which may end in death. Fall straightway on your knees, and ask for the Holy Spirit to enlighten you. Then take your Bible, and read over the 26th and 27th chapters of St Matthew, or the 22nd and 23rd chapters of St Luke. Having thus placed Christ as it were on the cross before your eyes, turn to the Sermon on the Mount, and try yourselves by it. So shall you be brought to look on him whom you have pierced: you shall be brought

to feel that by your sins he was pierced, and shall be filled with the spirit of supplication.

This, my brethren, is what a man ought to do, if he feels that coldness and languor, which so many complain of feeling, when they come to church and try to pray. The man who feels this palsy,—for it is a palsy of the soul,—should say to himself: "I am sick: I have that sad numbing disease, which I inherit from our common father Adam: a cold chill has come over my soul: I must go at once to the great Physician." Then he should kneel down, and pray to God for the spirit of prayer: and having done this, he should await God's good pleasure, nothing doubting but that sooner or later God will hear him, and will pour down the spirit of supplication abundantly upon him. Only we are not to reckon on God's hearkening to us forthwith. He may; and so gracious is he, perhaps he will. But on the other hand it is possible he may not hearken to us forthwith: so we should be prepared for the delay. For the Holy Ghost is God's best gift; and a father very seldom gives his best gift to his children the moment they begin to ask for it. A small thing he may perhaps give them readily: but, if the gift be great and precious, so that he would have them set great store by it, he will often make them wait a while, that they may feel the want of

it, and prize it the more when given. Thus do earthly parents deal with their children: and our heavenly Father often deals with his children in the same way. He knows how little we are apt to think of a thing that we can get easily: so he often tarries and delays for a season to be gracious, and even as it were hides his face from us, to accustom us to wait patiently for his time and pleasure, to teach us that every good gift comes to us from him alone, and to make us feel our great need and the great value of his Spirit, that we may use it the more diligently, and husband it the more carefully, when at length he pours it down upon us.

For pour it down at length he will, if we only persevere in asking for it: pour it into our souls he will, and that too most largely and richly. This is the purport of the two parables which we find in the 11th and 18th chapters of St Luke, the parable of the man who went to his neighbour at midnight to ask him for three loaves, and the parable of the importunate widow. In the latter of these parables the unjust judge, a person who neither feared God, nor regarded man, is represented as being moved by the prayers of a poor widow to do her justice; not because he felt pity, as a man should, for her helpless and forlorn condition; but because she troubled him with her

entreaties, and he foresaw that she would keep on coming to him, so that he should have no rest till he had seen her righted. Now what is the meaning of this parable? Not surely that the Creator of the ends of the earth can be wearied out by much speaking. Much less can it mean that God is an unjust Judge, who will not do right except he be constrained to it. The parable means, that, if even an unjust and godless judge, when he had no intention of helping the poor widow, was driven to do so by her importunity, that is, by her unceasingly repeated teazing and wearing entreaties, then great must be the force of importunity, great indeed must be the power of continual earnest prayer.

But here the old difficulty comes across us again. I am trying to shew you how you may get to pray. I have been setting before you the case of a man whose soul is palsied and benumbed, who has the sense to see that he ought to pray with his heart, as well as with his lips, but who, when he tries to do so, finds that he cannot, that his heart is cold and lifeless. Now it is plain that a man in this state cannot pray with importunity: in truth he cannot pray at all. His heart does not go along with his lips; and, till it does, there can be no praying. It may seem little better than mockery then to advise a man in this

plight to follow the example of the poor widow: just as it would be mockery to tell a paralytic man, who can neither stir hand nor foot, that, if he will take a walk on the downs every morning, he will be sure to get well. Would not the poor fellow, whose body was palsied, make answer, "Why talk to me about walking, when you see I cannot move?" So the other poor man, whose soul is palsied, might likewise make answer, when I spoke to him of the widow in the parable, "Why tell me to pray with importunity, when I cannot pray at all? The poor widow was no doubt very anxious and eager to have justice done her: and so she craved and cried for it. But I have no such anxiety and craving for the blessing of God in my heart: how then can I cry for it as she cried?"

I have stated the difficulty as plainly as I can; and my answer shall be just as plain. If you cannot pray continually, you can ask continually: and that, to begin with, will do as well. For God requires nothing impossible. He reckons with every man according to what he has, and not according to what he has not. Let every one then do the best he can. He who has been enabled to pray, let him pray. He who has not learnt to pray yet, let him ask. Asking is the weakness, and as it were the infancy of prayer. We pray for that which we earnestly desire: we ask for that which

we believe will do us good, though we have no great relish or wish for it. Thus a sick man has no great liking for his physic: yet he can ask for it, if he is persuaded it will cure him. When it is brought to him, he can take it, however unpalatable, and be it ever so many times a day. So you too can all of you ask God for the bitter medicine of repentance, if you really believe it will be for the good of your souls. You can ask for what your understanding tells you is wholesome, though your heart may be too sick to relish it. In a word, you are to try to pray, at church and at home, morning and evening, just as the sick man forces himself to take his draught at the hour ordered by the physician. If you do this, and persevere in doing it, to the best of your power, I will promise you, what nobody can promise to the sick man: I will promise you, that you will recover, that your spiritual palsy will be cured, that your heart will be brought into harmony with your understanding, and will no longer utter a low and false note, when your reason and conscience strike a high and true one.

This is the lesson taught us in the other parable I referred to, the parable of the loaves; which seems designed to encourage Christians at their first starting on the right road. In that parable a friend comes from far late at night

unexpectedly to a poor man's cottage, who has nothing in the house to give him for supper. So he runs to his next neighbour, knocks at the door, and begs to borrow three loaves of him. But his neighbour bids him go away; for he and all his family are in bed, and he cannot get up and open the door. The poor man however is loth that his friend should go supperless after his journey: so he will take no denial, but goes on knocking at the door, till his neighbour, to be rid of him, lets him have the loaves. Now we cannot suppose that the man who went to his neighbour for the loaves, had it as much at heart to get them, as the poor widow must have had it at heart to get justice. His then can only have been asking, while hers was real praying. Yet he was no less importunate in asking for bread, than she was in praying for justice. As she went on praying and praying, so he went on asking and asking; and neither of them would take a denial. Thus both these parables teach us the same lesson, that we should continue instant and urgent in our petitions to God for spiritual gifts, and that we are not to slacken or grow fainthearted in case God makes as though he did not hear. Both too hold out the same promise: and God, you know, "keepeth his promise for ever." That promise you shall have in our Lord's own words. "I say unto you,—it is Jesus

Christ who is speaking,—Ask, and it shall be given you. If a son ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? If ye then, being evil,—that is, if men in a natural and unregenerate state,—know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" So that there is no longer any room for doubt, seeing that God by the mouth of his blessed Son has expressly promised his Holy Spirit to us, provided we persevere in asking for it: just as in the parable of the importunate widow he has promised to uphold us against our ghostly adversary, and, notwithstanding all his accusations, to give sentence for us in the great day, provided we persevere in praying to him earnestly and fervently, as men who pray with the spirit.

This then is the way to get to pray with the spirit. We must ask for the spirit to pray with: and that not once, or twice, but constantly, regularly as for our daily bread, unceasingly, so as to take no denial. If we do this, God from time to time will pour down a fresh supply of that best gift of his, "the spirit of grace and supplication." Observe the order of the name, that it is first the spirit of grace, and then the spirit of supplication. From the spirit of grace we receive whatever is more closely connected with the covenant of grace, that

is, with God's offer of a free pardon to all who will repent and turn to him for the sake of his crucified Son. Thus by the spirit of grace we are taught, in the way I explained to you above, to feel first the great evil of sin, and then the love of Christ in dying for us. By the same spirit we are filled with a grateful love to God and to his Son for this their marvellous lovingkindness. Lastly, by the same spirit are opened on our souls such views of the perfection we ought to aim at, such bright glimpses of the graces we ought to seek,—such as the grace of holiness, the grace of patience, the graces of meekness, and temperance, and brotherly love, and selfdenial,—that, while we feel our natural want of power to attain to such heavenly heights of godliness, our souls are nevertheless stirred to long for them and strive after them, knowing that, though without God we can do nothing, yet by his help we can do all things. These thoughts and feelings the spirit of grace awakens and kindles in us; and by so doing it becomes the spirit of supplication. For it is as impossible, when the fire is put to the wood, that the flame and smoke on a clear day should not rise upward, as that, when a heart is warmed by these holy feelings, the sweet incense of fervent prayer should not rise from it to God the Father. Rather will such a man always be offering, not the offering of his

lips indeed, but the far more precious one of his heart. His thoughts, his feelings, his hopes, his wishes will at all times look and soar heavenward. As the excellent Bishop Taylor has beautifully exprest it, his whole life will be one continual prayer.

SERMON VII.

PRAY WITH THE UNDERSTANDING.

1 Cor. xiv. 15.

I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also.

Of praying with the spirit I have spoken to you already. But this, with all its importance, is not enough: we must pray with the understanding also. The reason is clear. We are God's property. Whatever we may possess,—be it the powers of our bodies, or the faculties of our minds, or the feelings of our hearts,—all were made by him. Therefore of right they all belong to him; and we only hold them under him, as tenants at will. Now it is the duty of tenants to pay rent: and rent accordingly God demands of us. But what sort of rent? Rent in kind; a portion, yes, and the best portion of every improvable faculty he has entrusted to us. When God gave the pro-

mised land to the Jews, he reserved the firstfruits for himself. The firstfruits of their wine and oil were to be set apart; so were the firstlings of their flocks and herds; and so was the fat of all the beasts that they killed. These things were a sort of reserved rent, which God kept for himself, out of the abundance of the good things wherewith he enriched his people: and they were to be employed as he appointed in his law, partly in sacrifice, partly in the support of his ministers. Now we are God's heavenly people, just as the Jews were his earthly people. As they were bound to set apart a choice portion of all the produce of their land for him, who was their earthly king, so ought we to offer and dedicate to our heavenly king a like portion of all the produce of our souls.

Were the Jews to pay God firstfruits? So should we. Listen to this, ye young; for this more particularly concerns you. You have still all your firstfruits before you. You, and you alone, still have that most precious of all firstfruits, the firstfruits of your lives. Offer them to God, by giving yourselves up to him, soul and body, while you are yet young. Believe me, who am somewhat older; or else ask the oldest man amongst us, and, if he was not religious in early life, he will tell you he is sorry for it now: if he was, he

will bid you, in the words of the Psalmist (xxxvii. 38), "keep innocency, and take heed to the thing that is right; for that brings a man peace at the last." Offer the firstfruits of your lives to God; and he will greatly increase your strength; he will enable you to withstand temptation, and will make you men, in St Paul's sense of the word, even men after the pattern of Jesus Christ himself.

Again, were the Jews to offer the firstlings of their flocks? So should we. You, parents, should offer him, and rear up for his service, those children who have been made lambs of Christ's flock by their baptism. You should begin from the very first,—you cannot begin too early,—to train them up by your teaching and example to be a holy generation to the Lord. For think of the trust which God puts into your hands, when he gives you children. Think what a child is; that it is an unfledged angel, who has fallen to earth from a great height, just as a young bird sometimes falls out of its nest, and breaks its wings. Thus our wings also, my brethren, thus the child's wings are broken by the fall: and God sends the young creature to us, to rear it, and do our best to cure it, and so to train it up for finding its way back to heaven.

Lastly, were the Jews to set apart the fat of every animal, and to offer it in sacrifice to God?

This should teach us to set apart a goodly portion, the fat, as it were, of all our faculties, to be employed in the christian sacrifice of prayer. Such is the rent we are to pay to God for the many blessings he has bestowed on us; out of every one of them we are to give him back that which is choicest and best.

Thus much, I trust, is clear. If so, the duty of praying with the understanding will not need many words. For of all the powers and faculties that God has given us in trust, the chief is the reason or understanding. It is this that distinguishes us from the brute animals. It is this that raises us to be only a little lower than the angels, and that fits us to be candidates for heaven. Therefore, being our chief gift, we are in duty bound to employ it in the service of God.

Some of you will perhaps tell me, that it is not our understanding, but our speech, that distinguishes us from the brute animals, and will remind me that for this reason they are so often called the dumb creatures, to mark the difference between them and us. It is true, they are so called, and very justly: for speech is one of the main advantages which we enjoy over the beasts of the field. But it is not our only advantage over them; nor is it the chief. You will see this in a moment, by minding what speech is. It is not the

mere power of making sounds and noises: most of the animals that we call dumb can do this. Speech is the power, not of making ourselves heard merely, but of making ourselves understood. It is the power of telling each other what we think and feel, the utterance of one understanding to another understanding. Unless speech does this, unless it expresses either thoughts or feelings, it misses its proper mark, and becomes unmeaning gabble, no better than the blustering of the wind. Yet how many, when they pray, that is, when they speak to God,—for prayer is nothing else than speaking earnestly to God about the things we need and wish for,—how many, when they come to church, send their thoughts and feelings wandering after other matters, and behave as if they fancied the sound of the words and the motion of the lips would be enough! Is this praying? It is not even speaking. For speaking requires thought: yet these people give no thought to what they say. It is merely repeating a string of sounds, which will draw down anything but a blessing.

Here we have two reasons for praying with the understanding: first, because it is the best and choicest of our possessions, so that we are bound in duty and gratitude to devote the firstfruits and the fatness of it to God's service: that is, we are to use it fully and vigorously in our prayers both

at home and in church. The second reason for praying with the understanding is, that we cannot even speak, much less pray, to any purpose, without it. Yet, plain as this must be, even to the simplest mind,—clear as it must be to every one that, before a man can pray effectually, he must understand what he is praying for,—it is a sad but certain truth, that for hundreds of years, while the Pope and the church of Rome bore sway in England, the public prayers in the churches were offered up, not in English, the language of the people, but in Latin, which to almost the whole of the congregation was an unknown tongue. In those days the Prayerbook was in Latin, the Scriptures were in Latin. Few English Bibles or New Testaments were to be seen; and those few were in the hands of the clergy or of the rich. The art of printing, which has so multiplied the copies of the Book of Life, was either not discovered, or in its infancy. From all these causes acting together, the light of the Gospel was in great measure shut out from the land; and the body of the people, instead of living under the midday brightness of truth, sat in a sort of superstitious twilight.

This evil state of things, God be praised! has long since past away: nor is there any likelihood of its returning. Why then do I speak of it? To

shew you how good God has been to this favoured land, in calling it out of its former darkness into light; and to set before you the benefits we have received, that you may learn to prize them accordingly. For only try to fancy what your feelings would be, were you to be carried back to the times I have been speaking of, when the yoke of Rome was upon this country, and when the service was performed in an unknown tongue. Fancy yourselves coming to church, and, instead of the prayers I have just been reading to you, which you can all follow and join in, fancy yourselves hearing nothing but a long service, partly sung and partly muttered, in a language you could not understand. It is easy to guess what your feelings would be. You would say, "Let me have an English Prayerbook, that I may know what the priest is doing and saying." The answer would be, "There are no English Prayerbooks." "Well then (you would go on), let me at any rate have an English Bible, to read to myself at home, since I cannot learn anything from the service at church." The answer would be again, "There is no English Bible for you; the Pope has forbidden your reading it." Ask yourselves what your feelings would be, were you carried back by some miracle, and placed in such an evil state of things. How would you long for an English New Testament

and Prayerbook! You would long for them as a sailor on shipboard longs for green fields; as a sick man, tossing on a bed of pain, longs for a little fresh air and warm sunshine, and for the power of getting up and enjoying them. Thus sadly and deeply would you miss the religious privileges you enjoy, were they to be taken away from you. Yet, though there is no man who would not repine and complain bitterly, if God were to take these blessings from him, there are numbers who make little or no use either of their New Testament or Prayerbook, and so to all intents and purposes do the work of the Romish clergy, and lock up these good gifts from themselves. For, as money lying in a man's chest can do him no good, and he might just as well be poor, so a thoughtless inattentive Christian of the present day might just as well have been born under the darkness of our forefathers: since his New Testament and Prayerbook cannot profit him, so long as he does not use them: nor can the service, though it is read in English, profit him, if he does not exert his understanding and attend to it.

The practical lesson I would have you draw from what has been said, is this. God has showered down his spiritual blessings upon you, and has placed you amid opportunities for learning his will greater almost than are enjoyed by any other

nation. You are not stinted in the means for becoming holy and godly. Churches, services, sacraments, Bible, Prayerbook . . an Englishman in a country village has them all; or it is his own fault if he has not. Sunday after Sunday, from the reading-desk and the pulpit, you may all hear in your own tongue the wonderful works of God. God of his free bounty has done all this for you. He might have cast your lots, as he has that of so many others, among the benighted heathens, among the poor negroes, among the most ignorant and wretched of mankind. Instead of this, he has cast your lot here, in a protestant and a free land, amid an overflowing abundance of all the outward means of grace and knowledge. God, I say, has done all this for you: what ought you then to do for him in return? You ought to bless him from the bottom of your hearts for giving you all these means of becoming wise unto salvation; and you ought to shew your sense of his goodness by prizing those means, and by making a right use of them. If you do not use and apply them for the purposes for which God intends them,—if you do not learn by their help to love his holy law and to keep it,—the means, so far as you are concerned, are thrown away: and you will be in the unhappy situation of the persons spoken of by our Saviour, who, having been first, became last. Having been

first in advantages, first in opportunities, first in the clearness and frequency with which God called you to come to heaven, you by your own laziness and carelessness will become last, and will have the pain and shame of seeing the very heathens admitted into heaven before you. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (says our Lord to the Jews, Luke xiii. 28), when ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." So would he say to the unprofitable Christian: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth: for you will see those holy men, the confessors and martyrs of the English church, by whose labours the Scriptures were translated, the Prayerbook was put together, the Psalms, Lessons, Litany, and Collects were selected and appointed to be read in the order best fitted to awaken and instruct the people,—you will see these holy men, who, having thus gathered together such a rich treasure of godliness for the use of their countrymen, became martyrs, and laid down their lives gladly, rather than let the Church of England be thrown back into ignorance and error,—you will see these glorious men, for these their pious works, high in the sunshine of God's favour; and you will feel that, if you had profited by the treasures they bequeathed to you, if you had made a right

use of the means of grace which those martyrs bought for you at the price of their blood, you, according to your degree, would have been where they are, and would have had places at the same table. But you rejected all warning while it was time. Therefore from being first you are become last, and must inherit the portion of the last. You must go away from heaven into outer darkness, afar from the blessed sight of God's countenance." This is the language which Jesus Christ would address to a careless and unprofitable Christian. This is the language which by me, his minister, he does address to such as neglect to profit by the means of grace, to such as neglect to pray both with the spirit and with the understanding. If there be any such among you, to him have these words been spoken: let him lay them to heart.

Here some of you may perhaps answer me, that you do prize the means and the books of grace, that you have shewn this by your wish to get Bibles and New Testaments, and that you are fond of reading them now you have got them, and of hearing them read by others. You do well. But do you also prize the Prayerbook? I fear not. I should have had more applications for Prayerbooks, and should see more of them in church. Without a Prayerbook, a man, unless he has a very good memory

indeed, cannot go along with the minister through the service; and the poor man who does not follow the service in church, loses the best opportunity of religious instruction which a grown up person can have. By attending to the prayers in church, you may be taught to pray: you will learn what to ask for, and may learn too by degrees how to ask for it. The service is indeed intended for the good of those who cannot read, as well as of those who can: and even the former, if they will take pains, and do their best to listen to the minister, will learn after a few Sundays to repeat parts of the prayers, or at all events to know what comes next; and so may add their secret wishes to the words which are uttered in their ears. I was once told of a very old and very poor woman, who was forced by weakness and sickness to keep her bed, and who in this state used to spend much of her time in repeating collects and other prayers. A lady, who often visited the poor woman, asked her one day, how it came that she could say so many prayers, seeing she had never been at school, and could not read. "It is very true," said the good woman; "I never learnt to read. But I have been a churchgoer all my life: and one Sunday I brought away a few words of a prayer; and the next Sunday I brought away a few words more; and so by degrees I learnt to say a great many of

them. And now nobody can think the comfort they are to me, and the pleasure it gives me to say them." A comfort indeed they must have been to her even here; and the Lord, who accepted the widow's mite, will not fail to accept her prayers, and to reward her for them hereafter. Now there is nothing in what this woman did, which every one else may not do just as well. If it were the custom in our churches, as it is in some places, for the minister to pray out of his own head, the old woman might have listened all her life without being able to learn a single prayer. But as it is, those among you who cannot read, and who have not the means of learning, may still follow her example. In doing so the way would be to begin with one of the shorter prayers, such as, "Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord;" and, after learning this bit by bit, to go on to others that are longer. Mind however, this is only for those who cannot learn to read: all who can, are bound to learn; and, when they have learnt, let them read their Prayerbook, and endeavour to pray with the understanding.

It is a blessed thing for every man, for a poor and ignorant man it is most blessed, to live in a land where, once at least every week, he may hear and be reminded of his duty to God. You may now and then pick up something from a neigh-

bour, who happens to have been better taught: but how few will be at the pains of doing this! No one who is so careless about heavenly things, as not to do his best to learn in church, is likely to take much pleasure in religious talk out of church. Indeed for those who cannot read, church is almost the only opportunity of learning the will of God, and all that Christ has done for men. For those who can read too, even for those who well know and understand all the main truths contained in the Bible, the church-service is of great use, in stirring up their recollection of them. For this world is like the enchanted ground which we read of in the Pilgrim's Progress, the air of which was apt to produce drowsiness in such as had occasion to pass over it. In like manner do the cares and business and pleasures of life take up and lull our minds, until we fall asleep on the road to heaven. So that the very best of us has need of a friendly shake to waken and rouse him from time to time. Nor did any man ever keep away from church, unless on account of illness, for six months together, without being sensibly the worse for it: though he may not be aware of this himself; because he will not examine himself regularly, nor take a full and true account of his thoughts and actions. If he did, he would find that his piety had slackened, that his love to God

had grown colder: happy, if he did not also find that he had caught some bad habit, and fallen into the practice of some known sin. But to the poor, to whom the church is the best school, and often the only one they can go to,—to the poor, who on workdays have little leisure for reading, and who sometimes know not how to read,—our church-service is invaluable. In the hope of leading you to set a due store by it, I purpose to explain it to you hereafter; and with God's blessing shall go through the Order for Morning Prayer, with the view of enabling you, so far as in me lies, to pray, as befits reasonable beings, and as St Paul commands us, with the understanding.

The prayers however are not the whole of the Prayerbook: far from it. There are also those beautiful Psalms, which are fitted above all other writings to kindle a spirit of devotion in the heart. Then there are the Gospels and Epistles, of which I need not speak, as they are copied word for word out of the New Testament. They shew how vain is the objection, which one sometimes hears brought against the Prayerbook, when persons, instead of judging it fairly, according to what it is in itself, try to disparage it by comparing it with the Bible, and speak slightingly of it, because it is the work of man, and therefore not equal to the work of God. They might as well speak slightingly of a

house, because that too is the work of man, and therefore not so grand as the sky above our heads, which was created by the word of God. There is a very simple answer to such objections. We have need of both. The sky was not meant to keep us from building houses to shelter ourselves; nor was the Bible meant to hinder us from composing prayers to express our wants and desires. But the fact is, that nearly two-thirds of the Prayer-book are taken word for word out of the Bible, being made up of the Psalms, and of the choicest and most useful passages in the New Testament, put together for the edifying of the people. And shall we not prize such a work? a work, nearly two-thirds of which are Scripture,—a work, the whole of which is founded on Scripture,—a work, by which the spiritual necessities of every class amongst us are plentifully supplied. Shall we not love such a book? If we do, let us shew our love by making a worthy use of it.

Many persons, I believe, who try to learn from the sermon and from the Lessons, attend very little to the prayers. But this is a sad mistake. For the privilege of praying to him is the greatest that God has given to us. He who does not pray, neglects this privilege, and throws away the opportunity afforded him of speaking to God himself. So far from not caring about the prayers,

you should say to yourselves, before you come to church, "I am going to the court of my King and my God, who is my Father also. I am going to speak to God himself. It is true I cannot see him: but the Bible teaches me that, where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there Christ is in the midst of them. So that I know he will be there. I will not be afraid to speak to him: for the apostle exhorts us to come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and help. I want mercy from God; for I often sin against him. I want help from him; for I am often tempted to disobey him; and I know my own weakness too well to put any trust in myself. This mercy and this help, which I have such great need of, I will ask from God this morning. I will ask boldly, as a son would ask a favour from a kind and rich father: but I will ask reverently, as I ought, when speaking to my King and God." If people would come to church with thoughts of this kind, the service would no longer be tedious to them. Anything is tedious and tiresome, in which we feel no interest. It would be tiresome, if we had lost our appetite, to be forced to sit through a long dinner: but no hungry man ever complained of its being tiresome to sit down to a table covered with dainty meats. So, if a man feels no appetite for prayer, the church-ser-

vice will seem long and tiresome to him; and he will be disposed to say, with the profane Israelites, "What a weariness is this?" (Mal. i. 13.) But he who hungers after righteousness, he who feels he has much to ask for, will duly prize the privilege of being allowed to speak to God: he will make the most of the opportunity which our service gives him of addressing his heavenly Father and King: he will be thankful that such good words are put into his mouth, to teach him how to pray. The service will become a matter of real business to him. He will be desirous of learning; and so he will learn. He will be greedy of obtaining blessings; and so he will obtain them. Our Saviour's promise to those who hunger after righteousness will be accomplished in him: he will be filled.

Here let me remind you, how bountiful your heavenly Father has been to you, in ordaining that every Sunday should be a day of rest, on which you should have no other labour, no other employment, than that of learning to do his will. Think what rich, what abundant opportunities for that purpose the holy rest of the sabbath gives you. One often hears people complaining that they have no time to make themselves acquainted with God, and his works, and his ways, and his will. Whose fault must that be? Assuredly it must be their

own. God has given them time enough. My brethren, did you ever call to mind that a seventh part of your whole lives is made up of Sundays? One week in every seven is a week of Sundays. One month in every seven is a month of Sundays. One year in every seven is a year of Sundays. A year of Sundays! And shall any one dare to plead that he has not had time to learn the will of God? "Not time enough! (the Judge will answer:) What have you done then with your years of Sundays?" Let us take a man in the prime of life, say at six or seven and thirty, cut off and summoned into the presence of Christ. What opportunities, what time, think you, has that man had for learning his duty to his Maker? Without counting infancy and early childhood, he has had four good years of Sundays,—four years during which it ought to have been his special business to listen to God's word read and preached, to pray to God in the great congregation, and then, in the quiet of his home, to think over what he has heard, what he has asked for, what he has promised. So plentifully has God provided for the nurture of our souls in godliness: he has set apart a seventh of our whole lives, ten years out of the age of man, during which we are commanded to abstain from every other work, that we may give ourselves wholly to the most important of all works, that of learning the way to heaven.

Only remember that these, and all other religious exercises, as they are often called,—and the word is a very fit and proper one,—are to be valued and regarded by us as means, not as ends. The end, the desirable end and object, which we ought all to have in view, is to become holy and godly. But the means, the exercises appointed by our Saviour, whereby we are to become holy and godly, are his sacraments, prayer, public and private, and the reading and teaching of his word. These are the means afforded us for becoming holy and godly: without using these means we cannot become so? by a right use of them we may. Still the means are not the end. The road which leads to London is not London. If a man once gets to confound these two things, and to mistake one for the other,—if he gets to fancy that saying prayers is holiness, that coming to church is godliness,—his error is most dangerous, and, if he is not cured of it, will be deadly. In the case of the road this is plain enough. If you saw a traveler sitting by the roadside, and he told you he was going to London, you would say to him, "This is the road; get up, and walk along; and, if you keep straight on, you will get there in time." So do we, God's ministers, say to all such as have the form of godliness, without the power, to all who come to church, without striving to obey God when they are

out of church,—to all such we say, "You have the right means, if you would only use them: you have learnt God's will, if you would only endeavour to do it. Practise, practise, practise what you learn: quicken your steps; move onward along the road to heaven; give over slumbering and loitering by the way."

But suppose the traveler, instead of following your advice, were to say, "No, I shall sit on where I am: for this, you yourself tell me, is the road to London: so, being on the right road, I shall soon get home." Were the traveler to make you such an answer, what would you think? Would not you pity him, as crazed in mind? would not you try to rouse him? would not you warn him that the only home he was likely to get to was his last home? that he would soon starve or be frozen to death, if he did not jump up and move on quickly? What then! are you not quite as much to be pitied, do you not quite as much need to be warned, if you persist in the very same mistake about your heavenly journey, and lie motionless, fancying that it is enough to know and see the road, without troubling yourselves to follow it? So far is this from being enough, that better were it to be born a poor ignorant Turk or heathen, better, much better were it for a man never to have seen a church, never to have heard

the name of Jesus Christ, than to have all the religious advantages vouchsafed to us Englishmen, if he rests lazily satisfied with the forms of holiness, without endeavouring to obtain the substance. To pray with the lips, if that is all we do, is nothing, and worse than nothing. To pray with the understanding, if that is all we do, is nothing, and worse than nothing. We must pray with the lips, and with the understanding, and above all we must pray at the same time with the spirit. And this we cannot do, unless we are in earnest in our prayers, unless our heart is in them, unless we are sincerely striving to abide in God's holy law, and to walk in all his commandments.

SERMON VIII.

LITURGY:

FIRST PART.

CONFESSION.

PSALM xxxviii. 18.

I will confess my wickedness, and be sorry for my sin.

HAVING already spoken to you about the great necessity and importance of praying with the understanding, that is, of understanding and knowing and thinking what you are saying and asking for in your praises and prayers to God, I shall now try to help you in doing so, by setting before you the general bearing and purport of the service you are accustomed to hear in church, and shall add such remarks on particular prayers, as it may seem to me that you will be the better for. That general bearing and purport you will find it easier to make out, if we divide what is called the Order for

Morning Prayer into three parts, including the Litany. The first part begins at the beginning, and ends with the Lord's prayer. This may be called the Confession, the chief thing we do in it being to confess our sins. The second part begins with, "O Lord, open thou our lips!" and goes down to the end of the Belief. This part I would call the Psalms and Lessons: not only because the Psalms, commonly so called, and the chapters chosen from the Old and New Testament, form far the largest portion of it: the rest of it likewise well deserves the same name. For what is that glorious Te Deum, which we repeat after the first Lesson, but a hymn or psalm, in which we praise God for all the wonderful and glorious works of his almighty power and love? And what is the Belief but a lesson? a lesson of faith, to teach the young, and to remind the older, of the great truths they are to hold to as members of the Church of Christ. The third part,—which begins with, "Let us pray," and ends with "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,"—is made up of the Collects and the Litany, which may be classed together under the common name of Prayers. These may be regarded as the three main parts of the Morning Service, exclusive of the Communion Service and the sermon. Each of them has a different subject, a different purport: each has,

so to say, a different keynote. The keynote of the first part is repentance: the keynote of the second part is praise: the keynote of the third part is prayer.

What has just been said of the Morning Service, you will easily see, applies to the Evening Service also; which differs from the Morning Service in little else than in having no Litany. Thus you may be enabled to take a sort of bird's-eye view of the whole; and having seen what are the chief limbs or members which make up the body of our Common Prayer, you will be better able to perceive how its various parts hang together, and what is the use and purpose of each, according to the place it fills. Thus too will you find less difficulty in following me while I go through them in detail.

The service opens, you know, with certain sentences of Scripture, one or more of which the minister is to read with a loud voice, that everybody may hear them. These sentences all teach the same truth,—that it is our duty to confess our sins with our lips, to grieve over them and renounce them with our hearts, and to forsake them in our lives; and they assure us that, if a man do this, God will graciously forgive him, and take him back into favour. This is the great, the most comfortable truth, which these sentences agree in

declaring: and because they all agree in declaring the same truth, it is needless for the minister to read more than one or two of them. Did they teach different truths, it might be proper to read them all. But as it is, if a man is only ready to take God at his word, one clear assurance of forgiveness will be enough to set his doubts at rest. Else, if he is not satisfied with the clearness and fulness of the assurance, as he hears it read by the minister, if he wants more than one assurance to quiet his fears in a matter of such great moment, he has all the eleven sentences in his Prayerbook, with a direction to the chapter each comes from: so he has only to take down his Bible, when he gets home, and to turn to the passages. Thus, by comparing scripture with scripture, he may convince himself, that God is indeed gracious and merciful, and ready to forgive and receive the humble and contrite sinner.

You will have no trouble in understanding why this assurance is placed at the very opening of the service. The chief purpose of our coming to church is, or at least ought to be, to pray to God. But to pray to God, unless we believed and knew that God would hear our prayers, would be mere idleness. Therefore are we told that he will hear us, yea that, sinners as we are, he will hear us, and that, if we will confess and repent of our sins, he

will pardon us and take us into favour. This is the great thing we need to know: knowing this we may have boldness to offer up our prayers before the throne of grace.

But we will look at these passages a little closer, that you may understand how full the assurance is which they give us, how plain, how satisfactory, how well fitted for all sorts and conditions of men. The first of them is taken from the 18th chapter of the prophet Ezekiel: "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." Now the natural question for a man to ask, when he hears this sentence read for the first time, is, "Who says this? how does the prophet know this? what authority has he to make such a promise? may I rely upon the truth of it?" I answer, You may: you may rely upon it most safely: for the speaker is God himself. Look at the first verse of the chapter. It begins thus: "The word of the Lord came to me again, saying." For this promise then of eternal life to the wicked who turn away from their wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, we have God's own word. And who can doubt that word? who can think that, though this may have been so formerly, it is not so now? That word, we know, standeth fast for ever.

The same holds of the gracious invitation in the verse from the prophet Joel. That too, if we turn to the passage, we shall find, is ushered in by a declaration that it comes from God himself. "The day of the Lord (says the prophet) is great and very terrible; and who can abide it? Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye to me with all your hearts: and rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil." Here again, you see, we have God's own word, warning us to flee from the wrath to come, and assuring us that, if we do so with hearty sorrow, we shall find that he is gracious and merciful, and full of kindness, and that he will turn away from his anger, and will only visit us with his love.

Perhaps however a man may say: "This may all be very true: God may be ready to shew mercy to others: but I am too great a sinner: God cannot forgive me: my offenses are so very bad, I am ashamed to confess them before him." What says the Bible to such a man? Are you polluted with worse sins than David's, when he had committed adultery with Bathsheba, and had sent her husband to be slain by the sword of the children of Ammon? Are your sins worse than adultery and treacherous murder? Yet David turned

to God; David confessed his sins; David had courage to pray to God; so should you. This is the reason why the second, third, and fourth of these opening sentences are all taken from the fifty-first Psalm; which was written in the bitterness of David's sorrow, after the prophet Nathan had brought him to a sense of his heinous guilt.

On the other hand, should any one say, "I have nothing to confess or repent of; I never did anybody any harm; I come to church regularly every Sunday; I am quite as good as my neighbours,"—should any one talk in this foolish way,—and this is much the likelier error of the two, inasmuch as a hundred men get entangled in the snares of presumption and selfsufficiency, for one who falls into the pit of despair,—for such presumptuous talkers there is an answer ready in the sentence from the book of Daniel, which stands next to the one from the prophet Joel: "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, although we have rebelled against him, and have not obeyed his voice, to walk in his law, which he set before us." These words form part of the prayer which Daniel offered up, when, to use his own words, he was confessing his sin, and the sin of his people. He then who is purer, who is holier, who is juster, who is more innocent than Daniel was, let him do as he pleases. But let all others be taught by Daniel's example

to make confession and to humble themselves before God. If even he, on searching his life closely, discovered sins to acknowledge and bewail, much more should we find them, if we looked for them, we who are spotted all over with sin; I do not mean, with black and heinous crimes, but with a number of faults and offenses, which, though they may seem trifles in the eyes of men, are sinful, and therefore not trifling, in the eyes of God. Such are the many offenses of the tongue,—vain talk, idle talk, profane talk, angry talk, spiteful talk. Such again are the many offenses of the temper,—hastiness, pettishness, peevishness, fretfulness, ill-humour. Such too are the many kinds of evil thoughts, covetous thoughts, envious thoughts, proud thoughts, lustful thoughts,—those poisonous serpent's eggs, which, if hatched by opportunity, are sure to bring forth evil deeds. Lastly and above all, such are the whole tribe of our offenses against God,—our want of love for him, our never thinking about him, our coldness in his service, our shaping our conduct according to our own fancies, according to what seems good in our own eyes, and not according to his holy law, our being content to do as others do, instead of striving to become perfect as God is perfect, and taking his word for the rule and pattern of our lives. All these offenses are sinful in God's eyes: yet

I will venture to say, there is not one of the do-no-harm people, who has not been guilty of many of these offenses over and over again, who is not guilty of several of them daily, with the addition perhaps of many foul acts of intemperance, not to speak of things still worse.

Thus, whatever a man's way of life may be, there is something in these sentences to fit his case. Is he plunged in the depths of evil? Let him confess his wickedness, like David, and be sorry for his sin. Is he on the other hand leading an innocent and holy life? Let him search the secret chambers of his heart by the light of God's word, and then, following the example of holy Daniel, acknowledge the stains he will be sure to discover there. This is the lesson taught us by the sentences of Scripture with which the service opens. Those I have spoken of, you may have observed, are all taken from the Old Testament. For fear however lest this should give rise to any doubts or scruples, three others are added from St Matthew, St Luke, and St John, to shew how completely the New Testament agrees on this head with the Old, and to admonish us that repentance and confession are quite as necessary and quite as profitable to us Christians, as they were to the Jews before our Saviour's coming.

After the minister, by reading one or two of

these sentences, has prepared the minds of his congregation for the duties they are met to perform, he goes on to speak to them about those duties in that which is commonly called the Exhortation. Many people seem to fancy that the Exhortation is a prayer, and repeat it after the minister. But this is a mistake. When we pray, we speak to God; whereas the Exhortation is addrest by the minister to the congregation, as everybody may perceive from the words with which it begins. Its purpose is to apply the foregoing texts of Scripture to the circumstances of the congregation, and to exhort or advise them to join in the general Confession which follows. This is the second step in the service. The first was to prove out of the Bible, that it is the duty of every man to confess his sins, to grieve over them, to renounce them, and to forsake them, and that, if he does so, God will pardon him. The second step is to entreat every member of the congregation to apply these texts to himself, and to persuade him, if possible, to confess his sins with a humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart, that by so doing he may obtain forgiveness.

Hitherto the congregation have had nothing to do, except to listen to the exhortation of the minister, and to the declaration of God's gracious mercy. But here their share in the service begins.

After the Exhortation, in which the minister has besought them to confess their sins, he repeats the general Confession, in which all present ought to join, kneeling humbly on their knees, each confessing his own sins inwardly from the bottom of his heart. That you may be better prepared for doing this, I would recommend you all to spend ten minutes or so every Sunday morning, before you come to church, in thinking over what you have done in the course of the last week, asking yourselves such questions as these: "Have I prayed to God regularly and heartily during the last week? Have I tried to govern my conduct according to his holy law? Have I been out of temper? Have I used any harsh or violent or bad language, in speaking either to any one or of any one? Have I been unkind to anybody? Have I been merciful to the poor dumb creatures entrusted to my care? Have I set a good example to my household, to my servants, to my children? Have I done my duty to my master faithfully and diligently? Have I gladly taken every opportunity of helping or comforting my neighbour? Have I been guilty of any excess?" Questions of this kind are soon asked; and if a man has an honest, open heart, and does not set about cloaking and excusing his sins, they may soon be answered also. The answer which your accusing conscience makes

to any of them, should furnish the matter of your confession. Such of you indeed as have not hitherto accustomed yourselves to this sort of self-examination, will perhaps be shocked and frightened at first at having so great a host of sins to confess, which you have overlooked and taken no thought of; just as a man who has been careless in keeping his accounts, finds to his dismay, when he begins to look into his affairs, that he owes debts upon debts more than he was at all prepared for. But whose fault is that? Surely not the fault of his honesty in examining into his affairs now, but that of his carelessness in not having examined them long ago. Painful as the examination may have become, from having been put off so long, every day it is put off it will grow more painful and appalling. Whereas, if you set about it steadily and heartily at once, the pain and difficulty will every week grow less. Short accounts, they say, make long friends, even upon earth. Much more will short accounts, such short accounts as I have been recommending to you, make long, yea immortal friends, who will receive you into everlasting habitations.

When a man has thus rubbed and brightened the looking-glass of his conscience before he comes to church, and by examining it carefully has found out all the spots of various kinds which

have stained his soul during the week, he will be ready and anxious to bear his part in the general Confession. He will join in it with the spirit: for he will feel the evil of sin, and his need of pardon. He will join in it with the understanding also: for he will know how to apply the different parts of it to his own case. Thus spirit and lips and understanding will unite to offer up a holy and acceptable confession.

But what does the Confession consist of? It begins with a full and entire acknowledgement of our sins,—that "we have erred and strayed from God's ways, like lost sheep." This reminds us of the passage in the prophet Isaiah (liii. 6), where it is said, that "all we, like sheep, have gone astray." Just as your sheep would go astray on the downs, if they were left long together without a shepherd or a dog to take care of them, and would be unable to find their way back to the fold, and the longer they were left to themselves, the further they would stray, so we too, if left to ourselves, are sure to stray; so we do stray day after day, and week after week; and what would become of us, unless the voice of the shepherd sounded in our ears on a Sunday, to call us back to the fold? As Isaiah goes on to say, "We have turned every one to his own way;" or, as it stands in our Prayer-book, "we have followed the devices and desires

of our own hearts." We have followed them too much: indeed we follow them too much in following them at all. This is the sin, on account of which the prophet Jeremiah rebukes the Israelites (xviii. 12): because they said, "We will walk after our own devices, and will every one do the imagination of his evil heart." This indeed is the sum and substance of our sinfulness, that we are ever following our own devices, our own desires, instead of the commands of God. Therefore are we for ever offending against God's holy laws. For the root of all evil is our choosing to have a will of our own: and for this reason, whatever we do, so long as our natural will is not broken and slain,—whatever we do, though we ourselves may think it innocent, or even praiseworthy,—is sinful in the sight of God. Thus we ever do what we ought not to do, and leave what we ought to do undone: nor is there any health in us. We cannot of ourselves cure this inborn disease: we cannot crush our will, and bring it into submission to the will of God. This acknowledgement of sin is followed by a supplication for pardon, a supplication grounded, not on any merit or claim of ours, but on God's free mercy, promised to those who confess their sins and are truly penitent, for the sake of Jesus Christ. The whole is then wound up by an entreaty, that, as we have no strength of ourselves

to help ourselves, God will vouchsafe for the sake of Jesus Christ to give us his Holy Spirit, so that we may be enabled to live soberly, righteously, and godly, to the glory of his holy name.

You see how much there is in this Confession, and therefore how great need there is that you should come to it with all your faculties alive and awake. Perhaps it may help you to understand it better, if I translate it into other words, and try to bring out its meaning a little more fully. The substance of it might be exprest pretty nearly in the following manner:

O God, our heavenly Father, we know thy great power, and dread it; for we have sinned in many ways against thee. But we also know thy great mercy; and in this we put our only hope, this is our only comfort. We are thy chosen people, thy flock, even as the Jews were of old: but like them we have strayed from thy fold, and have forsaken the path of thy commandments. Thou hast given us thy word to guide us: but we have left it to walk after our own fancies, and to work out our own conceits. Some of us have given up our souls to the cares of this world: some of us have been led aside and ensnared by the deceitfulness of riches: some of us have run headlong after shameful and forbidden pleasures. Our hearts sink within us at the thought of our dis-

obedience; and our souls are faint with the sickness of sin. But thou, O Lord, art merciful: spare us, we beseech thee, although we deserve nothing but punishment. As thou didst promise by the prophet Jeremiah (xxx. 17), that thou wouldst restore health to thy servant Jacob, and wouldst heal him of his wounds, so restore our souls to health, and heal them of their deadly wounds, and take us back into thy favour. Thou hast promised forgiveness through thy dear Son to all who turn to thee with true repentance. For his sake, and for thy word's sake, forgive us, who now desire to come back to thee. Increase and perfect our repentance; and grant us thy grace, that we may leave all our evil ways, and may keep henceforth in the right path, walking in holiness and piety before thee, in justice and charity toward our neighbour, and in temperance and purity within ourselves, that so we may please thee both in will and deed unto the end of our lives.

Thus much at least is contained in the Confession, when taken in its full meaning. After a confession of this sort, how consoling and comfortable ought the Absolution to be which the priest, as God's messenger, announces and proclaims to you! It is indeed the most delightful part of a minister's duty, to declare the glad

tidings of forgiveness to those who are sorrowing for sin, and, as the Scripture expresses it, to bind up the wounds of the broken-hearted. Our office at times is painful: for at times we have to find fault and reprove. But in the Absolution we have a different and a joyful task. We are to declare and make known to all Christians, that their sins are loosed, and that God has pardoned them, provided they are truly penitent; that is, provided they forsake their sins, and keep God's holy commandments, and do that which is lawful and right. Else the pardon proclaimed by the minister is of no effect. The impenitent have no share in it. They continue unforgiven, and are still under God's wrath.

After the congregation and the minister have been reconciled to God by the Confession, and after the glad tidings of forgiveness have been proclaimed, the minister and the people join in offering up the Lord's prayer. Thus we are brought to the end of the first of the three parts, into which the Morning Service may be divided. Of that most perfect form of words, which in a few short petitions sums up whatever man can want, or ought to wish for, I shall not speak at present. I must keep it for a course of sermons by itself.

SERMON IX.

LITURGY:

SECOND PART.

PSALMS AND LESSONS.

PSALM cl. 6.

Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.

THE first part of the Morning Service, we have seen, is a service of contrition and humiliation, in which we humble ourselves before God, confessing our many sins against him, entreating his pardon for the past, and beseeching him for the sake of Jesus Christ to help us to live better lives in future. Its key-note, as I have already said, is penitence. In the sentences at the beginning we are required to repent. In the Exhortation you are told to confess your sins with a humble, penitent heart. In the Confession we pray God to spare those who confess, and to restore them that are penitent. Lastly, in the Absolution forgiveness of sins is declared to all christian people who

are truly penitent. The second part of the Morning Service on the other hand, the Psalms and Lessons, is a service of praise and instruction. Its purpose is to teach the people what they should believe and do, and to enable them to join the minister in praising God for all his mercies. Its key-note is praise. It begins with a short prayer on the part of the minister, that God will open our lips, so that we may be able to praise him; and this is followed by a promise on the part of the people, that if their lips are thus opened, they will shew forth his praise. When we confess our sins, we are to fall on our knees as though we were sinking under the burthen of them: but now the nobleness of the subject lifts us up, and we rise to give glory to the eternal Trinity, through all time, past, present, and to come. Hereupon the minister exhorts the people to praise the Lord, and the people reply, "The Lord's name be praised." And praised the Lord is through this whole part of the service, in many various ways, by our praising him, by our giving thanks to him, by our glorifying him, by our telling out his works with gladness, by our setting forth the wonders of his providence, and the still greater wonders of his grace.

In the first place the minister and the people stir up one another, as the Jews did of old, by the

95th Psalm, to lift up their voices in the praise of the Lord, and to shew forth their joy "in the strength of their salvation." And who is that? Who can it be but Christ? Christ is our Saviour and our strength: through him we are forgiven and made whole. Therefore, as the lame man spoken of in the Acts, who had been lying asking alms at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, when his ancle-bones had received strength through the name of Jesus, stood up and praised God, so do we, when we are raised up from our knees, on which we have been craving the alms of God's forgiveness, stand and praise Jesus, the strength of our salvation, in acknowledgement that through him alone can we resist the temptations of the devil in this world, or his malicious accusations at the last day. We are to praise him, and to come before his presence with thanksgiving. The presence of Jehovah among the Jews dwelt between the cherubim in the Temple. The same presence, though invisible, still dwells in Christ's church. For so our Lord expressly promised (Matt. xviii. 20): "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Does any one wish to be in the presence of Christ? Let him come to church. Only when we are here, let us be duly grateful to God for his great loving-kindness in deigning to dwell among us, and to

hearken to our praises and prayers. "Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and shew ourselves glad in him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hands are all the corners of the earth; and the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it; and his hands prepared the dry land." Here is the reason for our thanksgiving and rejoicing. Our God is not like the idol gods of the heathens, who have eyes, yet see not, and ears, yet hear not, and in whose nostrils there is no breath. These are all false gods, gods of man's making: but our Lord is the true God, the great God, the only God, the God who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in heaven, and all that is in the earth, and all that is in the sea: and all these things are still in his hand: as his breath in the beginning called them into being, so but for his upholding word they would crumble away into nothingness.

But it is not enough to praise God, and to rejoice in him; we must also worship and fall down and kneel before him. For "he is the Lord our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand." He is our God, not merely as he is the God of all the rest of the world, but in a more especial manner: for he has graciously entered into a covenant with us, that he should be

our God, and that we should be his people. Nor are we his people only, but his sheep; a beautiful image to shew how he watches over us and tends us. We are Christ's flock: he has purchased us with his blood; he feeds us with his word; he refreshes us with his Holy Spirit in the fair and pleasant pastures of godliness. Thus the prophet Isaiah foretold of him (xl. 11), "that he should feed his flock like a shepherd, and should gather the lambs with his arm, and should carry them in his bosom, and should gently lead those that were with young." This leading and gathering with his arm, this carrying the young in his bosom, this gentle leading of the feeble, this constant succour and support which our Lord affords to his people, to each according to his need, is exprest in the declaration that we are the sheep of his hand.

Hitherto all in this Psalm has been gladness and thankful rejoicing. But God knows how apt unmixt joy is to get into men's heads: he knows how ready we all are to feed ourselves with hopes, and to take the promises of the Bible to ourselves, without considering whether they belong to us. Yet we have no share in them, so long as we continue in sin. Therefore, at the end of the Psalm, to sober us a little, and call us back to safe thoughts, we have a few most wholesome words of caution: "To-day, if you will hear his voice,

harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works." That is to say, when God calls you, when he commands you to do anything, or to leave anything undone, do not harden your hearts against his bidding, as the Jews did in the days of Moses, time after time in the wilderness, murmuring at every hardship they had to bear, shewing their want of faith in God, notwithstanding all the wonderful mercies and deliverances they had received, and forsaking the true God, who had poured forth so many blessings upon them, to go astray after the false and bloodthirsty and lustful gods of the nations. For a long time God bore with them. "Forty years long was he grieved with that generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their hearts; for they have not known my ways." But at last the day of grace closed, and the day of punishment began: at last God sware in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. This was when the children of Israel were in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh: and the story, as we find it in the 14th chapter of the book of Numbers, is so instructive, that, as that chapter is not read among the Sunday lessons, I shall tell it you at some length.

After the law had been given on Mount Sinai,

the children of Israel removed from thence, and journied on toward the land which God had promised them. When they were near the edge of the wilderness, on the borders of the promised land, Moses sent twelve men to spy out the land, and to bring back word what they saw there. So these men went up and searched the land; and after being absent forty days they came back, and told the children of Israel, that the land was very rich, and abounded with the fruits of the earth, and flowed, as it were, with milk and honey; but that the inhabitants were strong and warlike, that some of them were giants, and that they dwelt in great cities with high walls to them, which there was no hope of scaling or beating down. One might have thought that reports of this kind should not have frightened a people who had the Lord for their God. They had witnest his wonders in Egypt: they had been brought out safe from Pharaoh and all his host: they had passed through the Red Sea as on dry land: they had seen Moses call forth water from the hard rock: they had been fed from heaven with manna and quails: they had heard the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire when he gave the ten commandments, and had lived. Surely, after so many proofs of God's power and goodness, the Israelites might have trusted that he,

who had already done such great things for them, would not desert them at the last; surely they might have gone on boldly at the bidding of the Lord of Hosts. But no: their hearts sank within them at these tidings: they said, "Would God we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! Wherefore hath the Lord brought us to this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us choose a captain, and let us return into Egypt!" It was in vain that those lion-hearted men, Joshua and Caleb, who had been among the twelve spiers of the land, said to the children of Israel: "The land is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then will he bring us into this land, and give it us. Only rebell not against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land: for they are bread for us: their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not." Instead of listening to these brave and good men, the Israelites waxed furious at being thus crossed and opposed. From stubbornness and rebellion they went on to brutal violence, and, as cowards usually do, to cruelty: for cowardice is a very cruel thing; nine times in ten, as any soldier who has been in the wars will tell you, cowardice and cru-

elty go together; and the most cowardly men are generally the cruelest. So was it with those wicked cowardly Israelites. Though they were afraid of going forth to meet their enemies face to face in battle, they were not afraid of shedding blood: they were not afraid of committing murder, when they fancied that the strength of numbers was on their side. Because Joshua and Caleb joined with Moses and Aaron in exhorting them to obey God, they all cried out, "Stone them;" and doubtless they were preparing to do so. Now learn a lesson from these Israelites. Often as they had disobeyed God, and murmured against him, yet up to that time the door of mercy was still open to them. If they had not hardened their hearts, and shut their ears against the words of Caleb and Joshua,—if they had had the wisdom to see and believe that the Lord, who had shewn himself almighty against the Egyptians, must be equally almighty against the Canaanites,—if in the strength of this wisdom they had obeyed the will of God, and gone up to battle boldly,—all would have been well with them: they would have been forgiven; the Lord of Hosts would have been with them; their arms would have prospered, and their enemies would have been overthrown. But they did close their ears; they did harden their hearts; they did persist in disobeying God,

and were about to slay his servants. Mark the consequences. The door of mercy was closed upon them: the cup of wrath was filled to overflowing: they were condemned to perish in the wilderness. "The glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle before all the children of Israel. And the Lord said: Because all these men, who have seen my glory, and my miracles in Egypt and in the wilderness, have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice, surely they shall not see the land which I promised to their fathers; none of them that provoked me shall see it. Their carcases shall fall in the wilderness: there they shall be consumed; and there they shall die!" And so it came to pass. There they did all die, all save Caleb and Joshua. Out of that vast multitude of men and women, who came with Moses out of Egypt, Joshua and Caleb alone lived to see the promised land: because they alone had trusted heartily in the Lord, and had followed him, and obeyed him. This, my brethren, is the story of God's fearful judgement against the stiffnecked and hardened Jews, which we are reminded of every Sunday morning in the 95th Psalm, lest we too should harden our hearts against God's promises and warnings as they did, and should be afraid of fighting against God's enemies, and our enemies, Sin, and the devil, and

so, being guilty of the same offense, should be visited in the end with the same punishment. For we too have a promised land: we too have a place of rest prepared for us, beyond the labours and dangers of the wilderness of this world, on the other side of the grave, in heaven. That is our promised land: let us be careful not to miss it by hardness of heart and unbelief. Let us beware of provoking God to swear that we shall not enter into his eternal rest.

After the 95th Psalm come the Psalms for the day. Sunday after Sunday we repeat some portion of those beautiful Psalms, which are so full of piety, so full of trust in God and in his goodness, so full of promises to the poor and needy. It was only last Sunday that my heart leapt within me, as we were reading the 34th Psalm together, to think how blessed are the people in this country to have such words of comfort read to them in their own tongue. In other books I have read of God's caring for the great, or for the just: but the Bible, and books taken from the Bible, alone speak of God as caring for the poor. This is a mark which belongs solely to our religion, and which separates it from all false ones. Christ came to preach the Gospel to the poor. God is the God, not of the rich only, but still more, if possible, of the poor. In a word, the Bible is the poor man's book; and

it especially behoves every poor man to take care that his children learn to read it. But if there be one part of the Bible more plentifully crowded with promises to the godly poor than another, it is the book of Psalms. "The poor crieth, and the Lord heareth him, and saveth him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see how gracious the Lord is! Blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the Lord, ye that are his saints: for they that fear him lack nothing. The lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they who seek the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good." These beautiful verses,—and there are several more like them,—are taken out of that single 34th Psalm. Nor are the Psalms read straight through to you by the minister; you yourselves are called on to join in them, and to read them with him; you have the high privilege assigned to you of praising God in his holy place, by uttering the sweet words of David with your own lips.

The next part of the service is the Lessons, in the course of which the most important chapters of the Old Testament, and nearly half of the New Testament, are read to you every year. These the minister is particularly ordered to read distinctly with an audible voice, standing and turning so as

he may best be heard by all who are present. From this you may see how anxious our Church is, that you should hear the word of God. For myself, there is no part of my office in church that I feel more delight in, or that I take greater pains to perform, as well as I can, than this of reading the word of God to you in such a way that you may understand it. The only thing I ask in return is, that, so long as I take pains to read, you will also take pains to listen. And God grant that both my reading and your listening may work together, through the blessing of the Holy Ghost, to build up your hearts and mine in the knowledge of God's law, in dutifulness to his will, and in faith and love toward the Father and the Son, strong enough to preserve us against all the assaults of the Evil One!

Between the two Lessons comes the Te Deum, so called because the Latin hymn, from which it is translated, begins with those two words. Of this most noble christian song of praise I hardly dare speak; for I feel how unable I am to set forth its excellences worthily. It opens with a grand chorus, in which heaven and earth, the apostles, the prophets, the martyrs, the holy Church throughout the world join in worshiping God, in glorifying, and in praising him. This is to shew us that our God is not the God of this earth merely,

and of those who are now living upon it, but that he is the God whom it has been the joy of the faithful in all former ages to acknowledge and adore,—that he is the God of the heavens, yea of the heaven of heavens, just as much as of the earth,—that he is the God to whom the cherubim and seraphim, that is, all the various orders of angels, are for ever lifting up their songs and praises,—that he is the holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. But what, you may ask, is the meaning of the Lord of Sabaoth? These words amount to just the same thing with the Lord of Hosts: as you may see by turning to the 9th chapter of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, where the apostle tells us that "Esaias said, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like to Gomorrha." For these words which are taken from the 1st chapter of Isaiah, stand in our translation as follows: "Except the Lord of Hosts had left us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like to Gomorrah." The Lord God of Sabaoth then is the Lord of Hosts. And who is the Lord of Hosts? Who is this God, whom all created things bow down to, and all the blessed spirits worship and obey? The next verses tell us: "He is the Father of an infinite majesty:" He is "his honorable, true, and only Son:" He

is " the Holy Ghost, the Comforter." He is the one eternal God, who is revealed to us in holy Scripture under the mystery of three persons, as the Father that made us, the Son that has redeemed us, and the Holy Ghost that sanctifies us, if we are inwardly, as we are outwardly, the chosen people of God.

After this tribute of praise and worship to the ever-blessed Trinity, the Te Deum addresses itself more especially to that person of the Trinity to whom we, poor sinful men, are so particularly bound for all he has done and suffered for us,—that is, to our Lord Jesus Christ. To him it speaks as follows: " Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ! Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father. When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb. When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Thou sittest at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father. We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge." In these words we are reminded of the chief proofs and instances of Christ's goodness toward us. We are told that he is the King of Glory, and the everlasting Son of the Father,—that is to say, that he was begotten of the Father before all worlds. Before the earth and the sun and the heavens,

before the angels were created, before anything that is had life or being, the everlasting Son dwelt in the bosom of the Father, sharing in all his glory, and full of his wisdom and power. Yet, though he was so high above all beings, he humbled himself, and, in order that he might deliver us, did not abhor the Virgin's womb, but became man for our sakes, being made in all things like as we are, sin alone excepted: and having lived a life of pain on earth, after overcoming the sharpness of death on the cross, he opened the gates of heaven for his people, and now sits at the right hand of God, continually making intercession for them, as he will do, until he returns in great glory, to judge both the quick and the dead. At that awful day we shall have to appear before him as our Judge. Well then does it behove us to consider how we are to fit ourselves for that day of terrour. The Te Deum shews us this too. The thought of that day should awaken us to fervent prayer. No sooner has it confest its belief in Christ as our Judge, than it changes its tone from praise to prayer, and goes on: "We therefore pray thee, help thy servants, whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood." For thine own sake help us. Let not thy sufferings have been endured, let not thy blood have been shed in vain; let not all that thou hast done for

us be of no avail to us: but as thou hast done so much, even to the shedding of thy precious blood, for our sakes, assist us that we may obtain the benefits purchased for us by thy cross and passion, and make us to be numbered among thy saints in glory everlasting. To that end continue to preserve thy people, continue to bless thy heritage. Be thou our governor, our only Master and Lord; and, forasmuch as without thee we are unable to stand, do thou lift us up and uphold us. So may we magnify thee day by day, and worship thy name ever world without end. In order however that we may attain to all these blessed privileges, it is necessary that we should be without sin, that we should be pure and holy. But pure and holy we cannot be of ourselves: we cannot keep ourselves without sin. Even for this one day we cannot keep ourselves without sin. Do thou therefore vouchsafe to keep us this one day without sin. Of thy free mercy keep us: we have no claim upon thee, but thy mercy. Let thy mercy lighten upon us: for that is our only trust. And inasmuch as we place our whole and sole trust in thee, O Lord, let us never be confounded.

This is the way, my brethren, in which we are to prepare ourselves against that terrible day, which, while it will be a savour of life unto life for the godly, will be a savour of death unto

death for the ungodly. We are to prepare for it by keeping from sin, by trusting wholly in Christ, and by prayer. Many good men have puzzled themselves and others by asking, as the disciples did of old, When will these things be? Now so far as you and I are concerned, this question may easily be answered. To you, to me, to every one present, the awful moment, which is to close the door of repentance and hope for ever, will come, whenever it pleases God to call us away from this world. The hour of death is to every child of Adam the same as the hour of judgement. The page in the book of life where our name should have been written, is then turned over; and if it be not written there then,—rather if, having been written there at our baptism, we have blotted it out by our sins,—miserable, most miserable shall we be. It had been better for us that we had never been born, that we had remained lifeless clods, without sense or motion, than that we should have been called into life to throw that life away, and to die eternally. Mind, I do not say the door of repentance is open to you until the hour of death. I have no authority from Scripture to say any such thing. I only say, that after death the door will assuredly be closed and barred, and that no tears, no entreaties, no groans will then avail to open it. That it will be closed

before, I do not say. But there are so many sayings in Scripture about wearying the Holy Ghost, about God's giving us over to our own devices, about his refusing to strive with man any longer, that a person who reckons on what is called a deathbed repentance, leans on a broken reed; whereon if a man lean, nine times in ten, ninety-nine times perhaps in a hundred, it will either break under him or pierce him. For the man who puts off forsaking sin till he has lost the power of sinning, cannot pretend that he hates sin. How can a man be said to hate that, to which he clings as long as he can? On the contrary he loves sin; he only fears and hates the punishment of sin; and this he would fain escape. But can tears which spring from such a base source be acceptable to God, who tries the hearts and the reins? Will God allow himself to be mocked with such pretenses as this? No, my brethren: the only right, the only safe way is to serve God from your youth upward, to turn to him betimes, to come to him the very first moment he calls you. Let no warning go unheeded. Let no prayer pass over your lips, without your bidding your heart go along with it. Trust in Christ's mercy. Strive to keep from sin, and pray to Christ that he will help you to keep from it. Then and then alone

may you cherish the hope that you will be numbered among his saints in glory everlasting.

After the Te Deum the second Lesson is read to you. While the first Lesson, as you know, is always chosen out of the Old Testament, the second Lesson is taken from the New Testament, in the morning from one of the Gospels, or from the book of Acts, in the evening from one of the Epistles. The Gospels tell us what our Saviour said and did and suffered. The book of Acts sets forth how quickly and marvellously the religion of Christ spread over the earth, and what mighty things God brought to pass by means of the holy apostles, within the first thirty years after our Lord ascended into heaven. The Epistles are letters written by those apostles, declaring the truths which the Spirit of all truth had revealed to them, the truths which they went about the world preaching, which they sealed with their blood, and on the foundation of which they built up the Church of Christ. All these blessed words are read to you in your own tongue, so that even those who cannot read themselves, may yet hear and understand the great things which Christ has done for the salvation of mankind, and may know him in whom they are to believe.

Well indeed, after hearing the glad tidings of

salvation thus declared to us in our own tongue, may we all unite in praising God, and giving thanks to him, and calling upon all lands to rejoice in him, and to serve him with gladness. For now that he is reconciled to mankind in Christ, they who are thus reconciled to him may in truth serve him with gladness, not in the spirit of fear, as the heathens serve their gods, but in the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father, and are enabled to love God, as children love their father.

This second part of the service is then closed by the minister and people joining in repeating what is called the Apostles Creed, which contains a short and simple summary of the chief truths a Christian is to believe. Of this Creed the time will not permit me to speak to you now. Indeed there is so much matter in every line of it, that it requires a course of sermons to itself: and such a course I purpose to preach to you hereafter, if God allows me to remain among you.*

* This purpose was not fulfilled.

SERMON X.

LITURGY:

THIRD PART.

COLLECTS AND LITANY.

PHIL. iv. 6.

In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

THE third part of the Morning Service, as I said before, has also a keynote of its own. As the keynote of the first part is repentance and humiliation, and turns on the necessity of a humble and contrite heart,—while the keynote of the second part is praise,—the keynote of the third part is prayer. It is made up of the Collects and the Litany; which may both be classed together under the common name of prayers. For prayers they both are, only under different forms. In the Collects the congregation offers up its prayers *collectively*,

or in a body, through the minister, who is the spokesman or mouthpiece of the people, and who, in presenting their petitions, *collects* or binds together their wants and wishes, and sums them up in a few words. The Litany on the other hand is a general supplication, in which the congregation are to speak for themselves, and bear their part by means of the different responses. The minister numbers up the various blessings of every kind which are most desirable for Christ's people; and then the people pray to God that he will grant all those blessings. But whatever differences there may be between the Collects and the Litany in point of form, there is no difference in point of substance. They are like two roads. The Collects are a path where only one can walk abreast, and where the minister is to lead the way. The Litany is a public road wide enough for all the people. But both roads lead to the same place,—to God's mercy-seat; and both are traveled along for the same purpose, to seek and bring down blessings.

This third part of the Morning Service begins, after the minister and people have wound up the second part by calling down God's blessing on each other,—the third part, I say, or the service of prayer, begins with an exhortation from the minister to pray. Hereupon both the minister and the

people cry to Christ for mercy, and then join in repeating the Lord's Prayer, which I hope by God's grace to speak of fully some other time. The Lord's Prayer is followed by a few short petitions, which are to be repeated in turns by the minister and the people, and which in a short compass embrace the sum and substance of most of the blessings we ought to pray for. These are in the first place mercy and salvation; then the safety and welfare of the King. Then we pray that the ministers of the Church may be clothed in righteousness, to the end that they may shew forth the truth of the Gospel, not only with their lips, but in their lives; and next that all God's chosen people may have joy in him from whom alone all true joy comes. Lastly we pray for peace, for purity of heart, and for the continual presence of the Holy Spirit. Happy indeed are the people who are in such a case! Happy are the people to whom the Lord gives the blessings of peace,—whose king is holy and prosperous,—whose ministers are faithful and godly,—and who have salvation granted to them in its truest sense, being saved, not from the curse and condemnation of the law only, but from sin, from sinful habits, from sinful acts, from sinful passions, from sinful wishes; so that they are truly become God's chosen people, and their hearts are thoroughly cleansed, as befits

the temples of the Holy Ghost. For this is what those who are in Christ are, this is what we ought to be, temples of the Holy Ghost: and therefore do we pray to God that he will make clean our hearts within us, so that there may be nothing unholy, or foul, or unseemly, or profane in them, nothing that may provoke him to take his Holy Spirit from us.

After these sentences,—which, like the overture or beginning of a piece of music, are meant to bring the minds of the congregation into tune, and to prepare them for what follows,—we come to the three Collects, the proper Collect for the day, the Collect for peace, and the Collect for grace, to be repeated, the Prayerbook directs, "all kneeling." This leads me to say a few words on our good old practice of kneeling, which in former times prevailed generally, but which in these days is very much left off in most country congregations. Now do not misunderstand me. I know, as well as you do, that God can hear a man when he is sitting or standing, just as well as when he is kneeling. I know too, that, owing to the scanty room allotted to the poor in many churches, and particularly from the narrowness of the galleries, kneeling may often be very difficult, or nearly impossible. All these allowances I am willing to make to you. But then you in your turn must make some allowances

to me. You must allow, that, when there are two ways of doing a thing,—a better way and a worse, —a wise man will choose the better. You must allow too, that there are many things of no real consequence in themselves, which become of consequence from being the appointed marks of respect and reverence, or of the contrary. For example, if the king were to come into this country, and any of you wanted to present a petition to him, the king could receive the petition from you just as well, whether your heads were covered or uncovered. Yet not a man amongst you would think of speaking to the king with his hat on. Why so? For this plain reason: because pulling off one's hat is in this country the way of shewing respect and honour to our superiors. Now kneeling holds the same place in our duty to God, as standing bareheaded holds in our duty to the king. It is the appointed way of shewing reverence to him: it is the natural posture of humility and submission: and the man who does not do it, unless he has some good excuse, fails in paying God the bodily worship and outward reverence due to him. It is true, the worship of the body is nothing, and worse than nothing, unless it be accompanied by the worship of the soul. But it is equally true that the worship of the soul is imperfect and unseemly, and wanting in proper lowli-

ness, unless it be accompanied by the worship of the body. The two should go together, as they do in the 95th Psalm; where we are exhorted to worship and fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker. Thus we read of holy Daniel, just before he was thrown into the den of lions, that he kneeled on his knees, and prayed. Again we read of St Paul, that, when he had taken leave of the elders at Ephesus in his farewell sermon at Miletus, he kneeled down and prayed with them all. But what need is there to set before you such examples as these, when St Luke tells us of our Saviour himself, that he kneeled down and prayed? Shall the Son of God himself kneel when he prays? and shall we not kneel? Therefore I would advise the young and healthy,—of the old and infirm I say nothing; for I wish not to make the service of God, which ought to be a comfort and delight, a burthen to any,—but the young and active and healthy I would advise to accustom themselves to kneel during the prayers, just as they stand during the Psalms, and sit during the Lessons. So behaving, they will do what is seemly and right.

But to return to the Collects: the first Collect, you know, changes every Sunday; so that, with those for Christmas day and Ash Wednesday, and the three for Good Friday, you have nearly sixty different Collects read to you in the course of the

year. One or two of them here and there may seem somewhat difficult, owing to the changes that have taken place in the meaning of words since they were written: but for the most part they are very easy and short, much to the purpose, and exceedingly beautiful; and I believe it would be hard to find the same number of holy thoughts and fitting petitions anywhere else exprest in so few words.

The second Collect, that for Peace, is repeated every Sunday: so I shall go through it sentence by sentence, not merely to teach you its full meaning, but also to shew you how much more there is in the prayers than we have any notion of, till we come to look at them closely. The greatest part of this prayer is easy enough. Suppose it stood thus: "O God, who art the author of peace, and lover of concord, defend us, thy humble servants, in all assaults of our enemies, that we, surely trusting in thy defense, may not fear the power of any adversaries, through the might of Jesus Christ, our Lord." This, we should all see at once, would be a petition to God to give us the great blessing of outward peace, and to defend us from all the adversaries of peace, that is, from all who set their faces against peace, whether at home or abroad. This too is undoubtedly one of the things that we ask of God in this prayer... But

this cannot be all: or what would be the meaning of the words which I left out in reading it over just now? "in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom." These words, it is plain, have nothing to do with outward peace: so they warn us to look deeper into the Collect, and to understand it as a prayer, not only for outward peace from worldly enemies, but also for that outward peace which leads to eternal life. Having thus got the key to the meaning of this Collect, let us try to unlock it, and to see what treasures it contains. It begins, "O God, who art the author of peace!" And so he is. God is the author of peace, as opposed to war. But still more is he the author of peace of mind, as opposed to those inward fightings and distractions, which disturb and rend the unregenerate heart, making it like a den of serpents and wild beasts, full of everything that is venomous and fierce and mischievous. All these things God by his grace casts out of the heart, just as Jesus Christ, when he was on earth, used to cast the devils out of the men who were possest by them: and by so doing he gives us peace. But God is not only the author of peace: he is also the lover of concord. And what is that? Concord is a very expressive word, signifying the meeting and joining of hearts. Where heart goes along with heart,

and each man's heart is with his fellow, and there is no bickering, or envying, or grudging, or division of any sort, but all the people is of one heart and one mind,—there, and there alone, is true concord. This concord God is said to love; because it betokens happiness among his creatures, and brings them more and more to the knowledge of him, "whom to know is eternal life." For the only road to a perfect knowledge of God is through faith in Christ and brotherly love. Other road beside this there is none to that perfect and practical knowledge, which alone can lead to life eternal. But what are the signs of this concord? One sign, and one beginning of it, is peace of heart on earth: and this cannot be enjoyed, until the Spirit of God has wrought in us a hearty trust in God's mercy, and has broken the chains in which sin held us, and given us a new nature, a nature of humility, in which men rejoice to serve Christ, the Ransomer and Saviour of the world. This service may indeed be said to be perfect freedom: for the servants of God are free. They are not slaves, nor hirelings: they work not out of fear, from compulsion, nor for wages. But they are sons, and work like sons, regularly and steadily, on their heavenly Father's farm, being up and about his business early and late, and doing, remember, far more work than any slave

would do, because their hearts are in their work. These are the servants whom Christ loves, and whom he will invite to sit at meat with him, when he comes to his harvest-home. But it is not enough that our eternal life standeth in the knowledge of God; it is not enough that his service is perfect freedom: so frail is our nature that these thoughts have not enough power to bring us to know God and to serve him. In spite of all this we turn away from him, and walk after the lusts of the flesh. Therefore, knowing the cunning, the activity, the malice, of the spiritual foes who are banded against our peace, we pray for defense to the author of peace, that our trust may be in the defense which he vouchsafes to his people, instead of confiding, as too many do, in our own wisdom, or in our own valour, or in our own strength. The Christian knows that, apart from God's assistance, his own strength is the veriest weakness. But he knows likewise how it is in man's weakness that God is pleased to shew forth his strength. Therefore he takes good heart, and is free from all fear of his adversaries, knowing that he who is on our side is greater than they who are against us.

Hence you may see that, if we were to unroll the meaning which is wrapt up in this little prayer, and to spread it out at length, it would run pretty much as follows.

O God, who givest peace to men, and makest thy people to be of one mind, send peace and quiet to this nation. End all the jarrings and fightings and quarrels and divisions, which are shaking the heart of the country to pieces, and are piercing it with deeper wounds than it has received for ages from any foreign foe. O Lord, thou hast fenced us about, and guarded us more than any other people from the assaults of all our enemies abroad: guard us now, we beseech thee, from ourselves,—from our angry passions, from our unruly appetites, from covetousness, which is idolatry before thee, and which, as thy apostle, St James, teaches us, engenders hatred and bloodshed among men. Make the rich among us compassionate and bountiful, according to the abundance of their means: make the poor obedient and contented. But above all things give us thy peace, that peace which the world cannot give, the peace which springs from the knowledge that we are reconciled to thee through thy Son Jesus Christ, and that he by his death and resurrection has opened the gates of life to us. Fill us with thankful love toward thee for these thy mercies, that we may feel the glorious liberty of thy service, and may do thy will during our stay on earth, like dutiful children, heartily and diligently. But thy service, O Lord, is a warfare: and we, thy servants,

are living here on earth, as in some besieged city, open to the assaults of many enemies. Save us, O Saviour, from their malice: and as thou didst deliver thy prophet Elisha, when he was compast about in Dothan by the hosts of the kings of Syria, so deliver us who are now encompast by the fury and the wiles of Satan. Make us so to feel that thou art a sure help, that our minds may not faint nor fear, nor our hearts be disquieted within us: so that, enjoying the stedfastness of faith, as well as the quiet of peace and concord, and the tranquillity of a conscience void of offense, we may in all things have peace, O Lord, our God.

From this enlargement of the Collect for Peace, you may learn how to enlarge and apply the petitions in the other prayers. These petitions, I need scarcely observe, must be general; that is, they must be so drawn up and exprest as to suit the feelings and the situations of a great number and variety of persons. It must be left for each person, and it is the business and duty of each, to apply these general petitions to his own particular wants. With regard to some of the Collects there may perhaps be a difficulty in doing this. But in the Litany it is easy. One of the great advantages of the Litany is, that it goes into details, and mentions, one after another, almost every blessing temporal and spiritual which man

can be in need of. Moreover there is scarcely any class of persons, however high or low, from the king on his throne to the captive in the dungeon, who is not especially recommended to God's mercy in it. You should attend to this: as each of these petitions is offered up to God in turn, you should ask his favour for the particular person whom the words may bring into your mind. A common instance will make my meaning plain. We pray God that it may please him to preserve all that travel by land or by water. Here is a large class of persons, exposed to dangers of divers kinds, whom we specially recommend to God's mercy. Now a pious Christian will not allow these words to be repeated in his hearing, without thinking of their meaning. Has he a relation or a friend in far countries, exposed to the perils of foreign climates? has he a brother on the wide sea? he will think of that relation, of that friend, of that brother, and will beg a blessing on him in his heart, while the minister is repeating the words. This is what I meant when I exhorted you to apply the general petitions of the Church-prayers, each to your own particular case.

After the Litany comes the general Thanksgiving, which in like manner I would have every one apply to his own case, by giving thanks to

God in his heart for any particular blessings that may have been vouchsafed to him or to his during the past week. For instance, if I may speak of myself, you cannot suppose that, when I read the Thanksgiving to you last Sunday, it did not call up in my mind a grateful sense of God's mercy in having kept us free from fire, while there have been so many burnings on all sides, in having saved this parish from becoming the scene of murder, and in having preserved my neighbour's life and my own a few days before from the danger that threatened them. If I had not felt gratitude for such mercies, my heart must have been harder than a stone.

In this Thanksgiving the first thing that strikes us is the lowliness of tone that runs through it. We begin by calling ourselves God's "unworthy servants," thereby confessing that we know ourselves to be undeserving of the least of all his mercies. We give him "humble," as well as "hearty thanks;" and then, after mentioning a few of the chief proofs of God's goodness and lovingkindness to us, we turn our thanksgiving into a prayer. We are not contented, like the Pharisee in the parable, with giving God thanks: but, knowing how imperfect our very best thanks are, and how apt our thankfulness is to wax cold, we beseech God to give us a due sense of his mer-

cies, and to make us unfeignedly thankful, in order that we may offer him the only return which he requires and values, the return of a life given up to his service, and spent in holiness and righteousness,—that is, in the faithful and steady performance of all our duties both to God and to man.

This lowliness and humility is the first thing I would have you remark in the general Thanksgiving. The next is the nature of the mercies for which we desire to be made so truly thankful. The blessings of our natural and bodily life, such as our having been brought into being, and kept alive unto this day,—great and wonderful as these gifts are, and clearly as they bear witness to God's protecting care,—are passed over in a few words. What the prayer teaches us to dwell on "above all," is the inestimable, that is, the countless love,—the love concerning which we can only know that it is far above knowledge, —which God has shewn in saving the world by sending his only Son to die for us. This is the first of the three blessings we are "above all" to be thankful for. The second is "the means of grace," or the help which God has promised us toward doing his will by sending us the Holy Ghost. Without this second blessing, the first would have been nearly useless. For Christ came to redeem unto himself—mark whom ?—not sin-

ners,—not persons walking as others walk, after their own idle fancies, or after the customs of the world: he came to redeem unto himself "a peculiar people zealous of good works" (Tit. ii. 14). So that, if we had not the means of performing these good works granted to us,—seeing that, owing to our corrupt nature, we cannot do them of ourselves,—we should indeed be in an evil strait: and Christ's death would profit us as little, as the healing waters of Bethesda profited the impotent man, who had no one to put him into them. But now God has given us the means of grace, by sending us his Holy Spirit: and every one who prays to him heartily for help, will in course of time find himself strengthened to work the works of God. Lastly, we are to bless and praise God for setting before us the hope of glory, for calling us poor worms, the children of the dust, to an eternal inheritance in the heavens,—an inheritance which he came down to earth on purpose to place within our reach, if we will only throw aside our evil habits, and go straightforward and lay hold on it.

These three gifts, the gift of his Son, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the gift of eternal life, are indeed such unspeakable benefits, that to praise them would require an angel's tongue. But something to prove our sense of them we may all do. We

may prove our thankfulness for Christ's death, by eschewing sin on account of which he died. We may prove our thankfulness for the means of grace, by diligently using all the lesser means of grace, such as prayer, at church and at home, the study of the Scriptures, above all, the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper, all which means in this favoured land are so abundantly vouchsafed to every one. Lastly, we may shew forth and prove our thankfulness for the hope of glory, by pressing forward to obtain it, with all humility, patience, and perseverance. May God give you that hope, strengthen it, and fulfill it!

What I had to say to you on the Morning Service of our Church, is now brought to a close. Would that it might enable some of you at least to discern the spirit of that admirable service more clearly than you did before! that it might lead you to understand it better, might give you a truer notion of its exceeding fulness, and shew you how to use it, and to apply it each to his own wants and needs! I began by trying to convince you of the duty of praying with the spirit, as becomes Christians, and at the same time of praying with the understanding, as becomes reasonable beings. With the same exhortation I will conclude. Always pray with the spirit: always pray with the understanding. Study the prayers and services of

the Church: think well and often of their meaning: listen to them; join in them; read them; offer them up to God from the bottom of your hearts. So will God hear your prayers, and grant them in the way that he knows to be best for you. He will bring you in this world to the knowledge of his truth, and in the world to come will give you life everlasting.

SERMON XI.

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

FIRST PART.

THE ADDRESS.

LUKE xi. 2.

He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father, which art in heaven.

THE chapter from which these words are taken, begins as follows. "It came to pass, that, as Jesus was praying, when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him,—Lord, teach us to pray. And he said to them, When ye pray, say,—Our Father, which art in heaven." The same, or nearly the same prayer,—for two or three words in it are different,—is given by St Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount. Nor is this at all surprising: for, seeing that our Saviour was not fixt to any one

particular spot, but went about preaching over the whole country, we can easily understand that he should have thought fit at times to repeat the same parable, or the same prayer, first to one set of hearers, and then to another. St Luke's account however is enough for us; and we need not look any further. One command from our Lord is as binding as ten thousand. In St Luke we have the command in plain words: "When ye pray, say." And truly it would be well, if every command in the New Testament were kept as closely to the letter, as this of saying the Lord's Prayer. It is the first prayer a child learns, and, except perhaps a collect or two, very often the only one. Many persons go through life without being able to repeat any prayer by themselves besides. It is a prayer too in constant use. I doubt not there are many amongst you, who say it regularly every night and morning. Now just think what that comes to even in a single twelvemonth. If you say the Lord's Prayer twice every day, you repeat it about seven hundred times in a year, without counting the many times you are called on to repeat it and to hear it in church on Sundays.

Why do I mention these things? why do I remind you of the seven hundred times a year that you are in the habit of repeating the Lord's

Prayer? In order to make you feel the importance of thoroughly understanding it. It may be excusable in very little children to repeat the mere words, provided they do so with a proper sense of fear and love, such as you may easily teach them to cherish for their heavenly Father, by telling them that he sits like a king above the glorious sun, and yet is good enough to send his angels down to watch over little children. And I would have you all tell them this. I would have you talk to your children from the very first about God, and talk of him in such a way as may lead them to fear and to love him. Make them understand, that, when they kneel down to say their prayers, they are going to speak to God Almighty, and to ask him to do all manner of good to you, their parents, to their brothers and sisters, and to themselves. If you do make them feel and understand this, if you teach them to lift up their little hands and hearts together, God will be pleased with their innocent prayer, and will not require from them thoughts and understanding above their years. But though this simple service is doubtless acceptable to him, when it comes from young children, because it is the best they can offer, yet all who can must offer more. Those who are old enough to pray with the understanding, are bound to pray with the understanding. We must not

always be children in addressing God, and go on year after year repeating words without meaning. We must learn to see and feel the sense of our prayers, and to weigh the words well before we utter them, that we may know what we are asking God to give us. This, you may be sure, was our Lord's purpose in teaching us his prayer. The words have no charm in them: they have no power of themselves to draw down blessings from above, or to please the God of wisdom and truth. On the contrary we shall rather provoke God, by using them carelessly and unthinkingly. You know, I do not say this to dissuade you from praying. Perhaps there is no duty which I have recommended to you oftener. It is your duty to pray. It is your privilege as Christians to speak to the King of heaven. It was for fear you should be at a loss for words to do so, or should not know how to pray, or what to pray for, that our Lord taught you all this in his prayer; which is so short, that the busiest may use it, so plain, that the most unlearned may understand it, yet so full of meaning, that the wisest, with all their thought, will never be tired of it, or have done with it. Be duly grateful then to Christ, your Master, for having given you such a prayer. Use it constantly: but use it like men who are fulfilling a reasonable service: use it like Chris-

tians, who know that they must worship God in truth, and must pray to him both with the spirit and with the understanding.

For the sake of helping you in doing so, better perhaps than you have hitherto been wont, I shall endeavour in this and some following sermons to shew you as much as I can of the meaning of this excellent prayer. The Lord's Prayer, as it stands in St Luke, may be divided into three parts. First there is a short address, or invocation, in which we declare to whom we are speaking: "Our Father, which art in heaven." Next come petitions for the glorifying of God's holy name, for the increase of his kingdom, and the establishment of his authority over the hearts and wills of men. These are followed by petitions for the relief of our own necessities, and the supply of our wants, both in body and soul. In St Matthew's report of it, the whole is wound up with a humble acknowledgement that we are God's subjects, that he alone is able to help us, and that every good gift cometh from him. Such in a few words is the outline of the Lord's Prayer; and such are the parts it consists of. For the present we will confine ourselves to the first.

That first part I have called the address, or the invocation, because in it we invoke or call upon God by name, and tell him, as it were, that we are

going to speak to him, and beg him to listen to what we are about to say. Now what is the name, which we are here taught to use in telling our wants to God? I would have you mark this well. In the Old Testament, you know, God is spoken of under divers names, as God Almighty, the Lord, the Lord God, the Lord of Hosts, the Lord Jehovah, the God of Abraham, the Holy One of Israel. These are the titles most commonly given to God in the Old Testament. They are names that speak of him as he is in himself, glorious and infinite in holiness and in power. But turn to the Lord's prayer, and see what God is called in it. Is it by any of these names of greatness and might, which I have just recounted to you? No: they are too awful: they might frighten us away from his mercy-seat. Therefore God, who waits to be gracious, and desires to draw us to him, has taught us by his dear Son to call him by a name of love, a name expressing his love and his care for us. We are permitted to address him as our Father.

This name, by which we are commanded to call upon God, is one of the most remarkable things in the whole prayer. There are the seeds of it indeed in the Old Testament, just as there are seeds of the other truths of the Gospel. For instance we read in the last chapter of the first Book of

Chronicles, that David, when he blest the Lord in the joy of his heart at the sight of the rich offerings brought for the building of the temple, said, "Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel, our Father, for ever and ever!" So in two or three passages of the prophets the Jews are described as claiming God's protection on the ground of his being their Father. Yet even in these passages, in which God bears that name, it is rather as the Father of the Jewish people. To fix upon that tender name, to choose it out from all God's other greater titles, and to appoint it as the special name by which Almighty God is to be addrest by all his sinful creatures, whenever they pray to him,—this was Christ's doing: this privilege we owe to him.

To us indeed, who have been accustomed to it from infancy, it may seem almost a matter of course to call God Father. But to do it, and that too with a certainty that he approves of it, is so far from being a matter of course, that, if God had not expressly authorized and commanded us, we should never have dared address him by that name; we should have felt it too great a presumption to claim relation with the Lord of the universe. For just consider: what should we think of a worm, if it could speak, calling God its Father? Should not we think it a piece of mad presumption? Yet in one sense he is as much the worm's Father, as he

is ours: for he made the worm, as well as man. Now the same sort of feeling, which would lead us to charge the worm with presumption for calling God its Father, would, I think, have withheld us from calling him our Father, if we had not been authorized and commanded to do so. No such commandment, so far as appears from the Bible, was ever given to the children of Israel; at least never with sufficient distinction to be acted on. In the song of Moses indeed (Deut. xxxii. 6), the question is asked: "Is not the Lord thy Father that hath bought thee?" But this again is said with reference to the whole Jewish people, and to God's especial protection of them. In fact God was the King of Israel; but he never proclaimed himself the Father of each individual Israelite. That better and more loving name was kept for us, who are specially made his children by adoption. It was an additional privilege purchased for us by the merits of the blood of Christ. Would you know the value of that privilege? Hear what St Paul says of it. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage (the Jewish spirit) again to fear: but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. And if we are the children of God, then are we the heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 15—17). And again (Gal. iv. 6): "Because ye are sons, God

hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and, if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Thus you see, St Paul speaks of the privilege of calling God Father, as a new thing, recently granted to the sons of man, on their receiving the spirit of adoption, and being made the sons of God. You see too with what great things this new privilege is said to be connected; provided always that, in calling God Father, we do so from our hearts: not else: for vain words and empty lip-service are the known objects of God's displeasure. If however we can call God our Father in the sincerity of our hearts, St Paul teaches us to look upon this as a sign that God has taken us into favour, and considers us as his children, and has appointed us an inheritance among Christ's brethren.

But without dwelling further on this highest view of the matter, any one may see what a step Christ gave us toward heaven, by commanding us to address our Maker, not as our God and King, but as our Father. Any one may see and feel what a pledge the name contains that God will listen to our prayers. Nothing is commoner than for a child, when it has been ill-used, to say, "I will run and tell father." Take a lesson, my friends from your children; and in all your sor-

rows, in all your troubles, in all your wants, in all your temptations, in all your repentance, run for help to your Father, who is your God.

That you may do so the more readily, remember where that Father dwells. It is a Father which is in heaven, that you are to pray to. Therefore he must be most gracious; or he would never have allowed you to call him by such a name. He must be most powerful; for he is high above all things. He must be most wise; for he made the world. He is everlasting, and will endure without a change, when the heavens and the earth have past away. Having then a Father, who is so powerful and so wise, and who is also unchangeable and everlasting, what an anchor of hope must this thought be to us! His wisdom assures us, that he will find a way so to arrange the affairs of this world, that all our trials shall work together for our good, if we will only trust in him and love him. His power assures us, that, whatever he pleases to do for us, he can do: if he is for us, no enemy can overcome us: if he defends us, no evil can harm us: if he has prepared an inheritance for us, nothing but our own fault can hinder our attaining to it. For still more to secure the promise of this inheritance, he is also everlasting and unchangeable. What he has purposed once, he will purpose to all eternity; and all that he has

promised to his faithful children, he will be careful as well as able to perform. He may indeed make them wait for it, till he has tried their faith and patience by the delay. But the word of the Lord standeth fast for ever; and all who have the patience to wait their Father's good time shall in the end see his promises fulfilled.

Such are some of the comfortable thoughts most likely to spring up in the minds of every one who feels that he has a heavenly Father to call upon and trust in for help. But every privilege has its corresponding duty. Every gift is a talent and a trust, for which we are to make God a return. Let us consider therefore, what duties the privilege, which Christ has bought for us, of calling God our Father, brings with it.

The first and chief duty is the behaving to him as children should behave to their father. "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord," said our Saviour during his stay on earth, "and do not the things which I say?" (Luke vi. 46). Why call ye me your heavenly Father, will God say to us from heaven, and feel not toward me as sons ought to feel? It is true, God is the Father of all, evil as well as good. But a Father may have disobedient, rebellious children: and all who disobey and rebell against God,—nay, all who forget and neglect him,—God will be no Father to them. He will

disown them: they will find that they have forfeited their inheritance: they will be banished from his presence: they will never taste the joys which he has prepared for his dutiful children. Therefore, I repeat it, we must feel towards God as children, we must behave to him as children, that we may not lose the blessing and the inheritance which Christ has purchased for us at so great a price. If we were forbidden any of us henceforth to pray to God as our Father again, should not we grieve at the loss, and feel that we had been deprived of a great privilege? Yet all who do not pray to God at all, and all who pray to him without thinking, and all who lead such lives that their prayers are little better than a mockery, — all these do in fact deprive themselves of the right and happiness of calling God their Father. If we are aware how great a privilege it is, let us prove our sense of it by using it diligently. You need not be afraid of using it too often. Pray as often as ever you will, you cannot weary God with your petitions. To the prayer of the dutiful and godly heart his ears are always open.

But as the permission to call God our Father should make us love him, and encourage us to pray to him, so the knowledge that our Father is in heaven, and can do whatsoever he pleases, should fill us with faith and a courageous trust in him.

Moreover it should raise our thoughts to heaven, and lead us to think of it, and to love it as our home. For what is home to a child, but where its father lives? If our Father then be dwelling in heaven, heaven must be our home. True, it is a home we have never yet seen. For we are like a king's children put out to nurse, and sent to school, at a distance from the palace, to be brought up hardly, and disciplined by divers kinds of trials, until we have learnt steadiness and self-knowledge enough to be admitted into our Father's glorious mansions. But, though we have never seen heaven, yet we know enough of it from Scripture to enable us to think of it, till our hearts kindle at the thought into an active desire of going thither. We know quite enough of it to teach us what we must do in order that we may be fitted for becoming dwellers there. We are told that it is the abode of happiness, the abode of love, the abode of peace, the abode of holiness: we know that no unclean thing can enter there, that no sinner can gain admission, that no soul spotted with that hideous leprosy will be allowed to carry its loathsomeness into the presence of God. Above all we know that heaven is our home, the place we ought to be journeying to, the city of our destination, where our happiness is to consist in seeing our Father, and gazing on him till we become like him.

Here then is abundance of materials, out of which to regulate our lives, and to dress our thoughts for prayer. For such as heaven is, such should we be at all times, but more especially at the times when we are praying to our Father which is in heaven. The more spiritual, the more peaceful, the humbler our frame of mind, the fitter will it be for speaking to the Lord of the Universe, the Father of Spirits, the Prince of Peace. On the other hand, to address so mighty and holy a Being with hearts full of earth and the things of earth, to speak as if we considered heaven our home, when we are laying up our treasure on earth, —to profess that we are only journeying through this life to another, and yet neither make provision nor wish for that other enduring life, and to spend our time as if this world were our all,—what is this but a mockery of our Father which is in heaven? and what effect can such a way of praying and of living have, except to draw down condemnation on our heads?

Thus have I endeavoured to set before you the great mercy and lovingkindness of the God of heaven, in humbling himself to behold the things that are done in the earth, and in allowing such creatures as we are to address him by the dear and honoured name of Father. I have shewn you that this is a christian privilege. I have shewn you

the value you ought to set on it, and the use you ought to make of it. Lastly, I have spoken to you of the feelings with which it becomes us, outcasts from Paradise, to lift our hearts to our God and Father, during our banishment and schooling here below. But there is still one little word in the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, which as yet I have made no remark on. That word is *our*. We are commanded to say, *our* Father, and not *my* Father, to teach us not to pray for ourselves alone, but for the whole family of God and Christ on earth. When we say Our Father, we ought to bear in mind that God has other children beside us, children who have equal claims on his mercy and love, children whom he loves as well as us, and that, if they are more pious and more obedient, he loves them better. We should remember too that, if we are all the sons of one common Father, we must all be brothers and sisters. Here is a fruitful subject for self-examination. Do we love as brothers? Do we live together as brothers ought to live, in peace and concord? Do we help each other to the utmost of our power? Do we rejoice in our brother's prosperity, though the like may not befall ourselves? Do we feel that concern for their welfare, not in body only, but in soul, which ought to live in the hearts of all such as declare themselves

before God to be members of one great family, by praying not for ourselves alone, but in the same breath for our brethren also? This is the way in which the words of Scripture may be spiritualized and turned to profit,—namely, by pondering their meaning. The more we look, the more we shall find. Every step we take in the word of God brings out fresh and fresh truths to us, and reveals some new, unthought-of lesson of wisdom and holiness. By this one little word, our, we are reminded that the bond of brotherhood which links us together as children of the same Father, ought at all times to be so present to us, that we are to mention it even in our prayers. We are not even to speak to God, except as members of a great family: we are not even to pray for general and common blessings to ourselves, without asking God to grant the same blessings to our neighbours also.

Such, my brethren, are the thoughts which the opening of the Lord's Prayer is fitted to awaken in the true Christian. Such are the feelings with which we are to come to God, when we pray to him. We are to come to him humbly and gratefully for his merciful grace in admitting us so lovingly into his mighty presence. We are to come to him in faith and trust; for he is faithful, and will perform. We are to come to him with

hearts full of love toward our neighbours: for he is their Father as well as ours: and no good father will listen to a son, who does not wish well to his brothers, and think well of them, and speak well of them, and do all the good he can to them. In a word, the address at the head of the Lord's Prayer is an exhortation to us to fulfill both the two great commandments. "I am your Father," saith God: "therefore love me. Your neighbours are my children: therefore love your brethren."

SERMON XII.

LORD'S PRAYER:

SECOND PART.

GOD'S NAME: JUSTICE AND MERCY.

LUKE xi. 2.

Hallowed be thy name.

HAVING set before you the thoughts and feelings which our Saviour seems to have purposed to excite and call up in our souls, when he taught us to begin our prayer with saying, "Our Father, which art in heaven," I shall now go on to explain the second part of the Lord's Prayer, in which we tell our heavenly Father what are the first and dearest wishes of our hearts. That second part is made up of three petitions; petitions for what? for our own welfare? for our own health or wealth? for our own greatness? for our own honour? for the

forgiveness of our own sins? for any one of the countless things that men's hearts are usually set on? Nothing of the sort. The petitions, which Jesus has taught us to offer up in the second part of his Prayer, are not for our own honour, but for God's; that his name may be hallowed and glorified,—that his kingdom may be spread over the earth,—that his will may rule over the hearts and affections of all mankind. The prayer does not say, Grant, O Father, that our names may be held in honour;—but, "Hallowed be thy name!" It does not say, May riches, and power, and health, and every other good thing come to us; but, "Thy kingdom come!" Nor does it teach us to pray that our own wills may be granted to us; but, "Thy will be done?"

Now is not this a marvellous thing, brethren? that, when we are praying,—that is, when we are speaking to God about all our chiefest wants, about everything that we have most at heart,—we are to pray for God's glory, and God's kingdom, and the doing of God's will, before we presume to ask anything for ourselves. Hence we may learn how entirely it is our duty on all and every occasion to give God, and the things of God, the first place in our hearts. For out of the abundance of the heart, you know, the mouth speaketh. Accordingly the same Lord, who here commands us, when

we pray, to pray in the first instance for such things as pertain to the glory of God, before we say a word about our own private needs, has taught us in another place that the first thing we are to seek for is the kingdom of God and his righteousness, promising us that, if we do so, all such things as are necessary for our bodily life shall be added to us. My brethren, do you hear this gracious promise?—it is our Lord Jesus Christ who makes it,—that, if we will behave ourselves to God like dutiful sons, if we will prefer his honour to our own honour, his will to our own will, he on his part will behave to us like a bountiful and loving father, and will give us the things we have need of, in such measure as he shall think best for us. Let not this rich promise be thrown away upon us. Let us take hold of it, and obtain a share in it. Let us seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness above and before all things. Let us make these our first and chiefest objects, not in word only, but in deed. Then may we proceed with all humility to offer up petitions for ourselves, and pray God of his mercy to give us all things needful both for our souls and our bodies.

Do not say, brethren, that this is a hard lesson. For are you not God's children? Do you not call God your Father? Believe that he is so; and all the rest will be easy to you. Is not a good son

anxious for his father's interests? Is not a good son jealous for his father's credit? Is not a good son pained, if his father's property is injured? Is not a good son moved to anger, if he hears his father ill spoken of? Only bear steadily in mind that you are the adopted sons of God; and after a time you will find little or no difficulty in entering into the spirit of the Lord's Prayer. You will soon grow to think it quite natural to pray for your Father's honour, for your Father's kingdom, and for the ready performance of your Father's will, before you give a thought to your own wants, or frame a petition for yourselves.

Of the three petitions which our Lord commands us to offer up for our Father's glory, the first is, that his name may be hallowed, or, in other words, may be made and kept holy. Now what is meant here by God's name? God's name, in the language of Scripture, is all that we know about him, all that he has been pleased to tell us and declare to us about himself. For thus we read in the book of Exodus (xxxiv. 6), that "the Lord descended in the cloud on Mount Sinai, and stood with Moses there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands,

forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Such is God's name, that is, his nature and character, so far as he has been pleased to make it known to us: and it is for the hallowing of his name, or nature, or character, that Jesus teaches us to pray.

Not that God's name can be more truly holy in itself at one time than at another. The name of the Holy One of Israel is always equally holy in itself; just as the sun in itself is always equally hot and glorious. To us however the sun is sometimes hotter, and sometimes colder, sometimes brighter, and sometimes less bright: sometimes too we lose sight of it altogether, and are left in night and darkness. So it is with God's name. Though in itself it is always holy, all-holy, yet by us sinners it is more reverenced and more hallowed at one time than at another. There is a summer of the soul, when we bask in the sunshine of God's countenance; and there is also a winter of the soul, when our souls are cold and wither for the want of his cheering, enlivening presence. There is a night too of the soul, when we lose all sense and feeling of his holiness, and are as it were left in the darkness of sin. Therefore, in praying that God's name may be hallowed, we pray that there may be no more spiritual winter, no more spiritual

darkness, but that the souls of all men may at all times feel the same bright and gladdening sense of God's true nature and character: we pray that all men may at all times think of God truly as he is.

Now there is much need, believe me, of praying for this. There is much need of praying that we may all of us always cherish true and holy and reverent thoughts about God. For very few persons, I fear, are in the habit of thinking of God truly as he is. Very few persons are in the habit of thinking of God exactly as he has revealed himself to us in the Bible. Many go so far wrong, that, when they are tempted to do evil, they will even say in their hearts, "Tush! God does not care for this or that. He will not be so severe as to punish or mark such things as sabbath-breaking, or getting drunk now and then. Surely he will overlook them: surely he must forgive them." Now they who speak or think in this manner, are so far from hallowing or honouring God's name, that in fact they do him the greatest dishonour. They lower his holiness, and bring it down from the height and purity of heaven to the low, crooked, corrupt standard of erring and sinful man. If God were such a God as these wicked men fancy, he would no longer be God. He would want all that hatred of wickedness, and all that per-

fect justice, which now shine forth in him so brightly; and he would have the easiness, the carelessness, the goodnature, as we choose to call it, but, more correctly speaking, the weakness of a man. One may easily see what an insult it is to God, to think of him in this low degrading manner. Accordingly in the 50th Psalm this is the last complaint brought forward by God against the wicked, that they thought him such a one as themselves. "These things hast thou done," he there says to the wicked man, after numbering up his sins, "these things hast thou done, and I held my tongue:—I did not straightway shew forth my wrath, and send out my vengeance to consume thee;—and thou thoughtest wickedly that I am even such a one as thyself,—unmindful of my word, and heedless of what goes on in the world. —But I will reprove thee, and set before thee the things that thou hast done.—I will prove to thee that I have not forgotten thy sins, but will set them before thee in all their hatefulness; and not one of the number shall be left out.—O consider this, ye that forget God, ye that either banish him altogether from your thoughts, or dishonour him by robbing him of his justice and holiness, consider this, bethink yourselves of my name, bethink yourselves that I will by no means clear the guilty,—lest I pluck you away—in the very

midst of your sins,—and there be none to deliver you." Such is God's language to those wicked persons who would make him out to be like themselves, careless and regardless about good and evil. Would, my brethren, that I could make you see this in its true light! Would that I could make you all understand and feel, that there are no sins, no wilful sin, no sin repeated and persevered in, which can be little before God! There is nothing too little for God to see, nothing so trifling that God should overlook it. His eye is over all his works. Look at the smallest leaf, at the tiniest flower, at the pettiest insect. Does God even overlook them? On the contrary, their colours are often as bright, and all their parts are as delicate, as finely formed and nicely put together, as if God had employed all his care and wisdom and power in making them. The very hairs of our heads, we know, God does not overlook: even them, we know, he has numbered. My brethren, if God numbers the hairs of our heads, be ye sure that he also numbers the sins of our souls. Not one of them will be forgotten. Nor deceive yourselves with the thought that small sins cannot be dangerous, even though God does take note of them. How is it with poisons? Does it take a great quantity to kill a man? A few grains or drops of the deadlier poisons, a cupful of the

least dangerous, is enough to lay us in the grave. And so it is with sin. Some sins may be deadlier and still more hopeless than others; but any one sin persisted in and unrepented of is enough to kill the soul.

On the other hand, as the hardened sinner dishonours God's name, by robbing him of his justice and hatred against sin, so does the despairing sinner dishonour God in another way, by forgetting his mercy and lovingkindness. For if it be part of God's name, that he "will by no means clear the guilty," it is equally a part of his name,—yes, and a dearer part, a part which he values more highly, a part which he declares to us more frequently,—that he "is merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin;"—on the repentance,—for so the Gospel adds,—on the repentance and amendment of the sinner. If any one then paints God to himself as harsh and cruel and unforgiving,—if any one is afraid of coming to God through Christ in full faith and humble trust of being received into favour,—such a man dishonours God's name of mercy, just as the bold and hardened sinner dishonours God's name of justice. Both Justice and Mercy are part of God's name: they both belong to him, and are both inseparable from him. They

are, as it were, his right and left hands; Justice being the left hand, wherewith he strikes the impenitent down to hell,—Mercy the right hand, wherewith he seals the pardon of every humble and contrite soul, and takes it, and lifts it up to heaven.

Therefore, when we pray that God's name may be hallowed among the sons of men, we pray, in other words, that they may have such a true and lively sense both of his justice and of his mercy, as may lead them at once to fear and to love him. We pray too that the fear and the love of God may be ever present to men's minds, so as to frighten them from sin, and win them over to God and goodness. For this is the right use to make of the great things which the Bible tells us of God's mercy and longsuffering, and of his anxiety to save sinners. These things should not encourage us to go on sinning, but rather should melt us with shame for our past offenses, and make us deem it ungenerous and base to take advantage of God's goodness, and persist in disobeying and grieving so loving and merciful a Father. This, I say, is the right use to make of our knowledge that God's name is Mercy: and he who turns his knowledge to this account,—he who is melted and won over by God's inestimable goodness in sending his Son Jesus Christ to bring us back to him, that

he would not offend him for a thousand worlds,—that man may be truly said to hallow God's name, whether he is uttering it with his lips or no. He has a right sense of God's true nature, and, to speak with St Peter, has sanctified the Lord God in his heart.

But since we are made up of soul and body, not only does it behove us to sanctify and hallow our Father and Saviour in our hearts and souls; we must also hallow him with our bodies, and with outward actions, by paying him that tribute of reverence on all occasions, which is due from a creature to its great Maker, from a son to a royal Father, from a pardoned sinner to a forgiving God. Here we may take a lesson from the account in St Luke of the woman who was a sinner. She was not content with feeling love and reverence for Jesus Christ in her heart; she shewed and proved her love, by standing at his feet behind him, weeping, and kissing his feet, and washing them with her tears, and wiping them with her long hair, and anointing them with precious ointment. She did all this, because she had been forgiven much. And have not we too been forgiven much? Let us then in like manner shew our reverence to God, by paying him every outward service with our bodies: for they too, as well as our souls, are his.

For instance, let us hallow him with our tongues and voices, by telling forth all his praise, especially by joining in the public service of the Church, in repeating and singing the Psalms, and uttering the responses aloud. Let us hallow him with our bodies, by kneeling when we pray, or at least, if we cannot kneel, by standing, instead of sitting or lolling irreverently, as too many are apt to do while the prayers are offered up by the minister. Let us hallow him in all our conversation, by carefully refraining from all bad words, from all sinful and impure and unholy talk, and from everything which borders on cursing and swearing,—that boldest, that most unhallowed, that most foolish of sins.

Lastly, let us hallow God's name, by reverencing everything belonging to him, his word, his day, his sacraments, his ministers, his people. "If a man hates his brother," says St John, "how can he love God?" So, if a man despise and mock at a Christian, how can he be said to hallow Christ? "Love me," says God, "and love my people; reverence me, and reverence my people." Yet how many men are there, who would be surprised and greatly offended if they were told that they do not hallow God, and who nevertheless are in the habit of jeering and sneering at all such persons as shew what they deem an over-

scrupulous anxiety to hallow God's name in everything they say and do! Many are they who will speak scornfully of such persons, especially if they happen to make a slip. How unreasonable is this, as well as unchristian! No one, so long as he continues here on earth, can become perfect in all the graces of the christian life. The hill of godliness is steep and slippery; and hardly any foot is so steady, that it will not falter and give way now and then, especially in the lower part of the ascent. If two brothers were traveling together, a long and toilsome journey, to their father's home, and one of them were to stumble or fall by the way, would it be brotherly in the other to laugh at him, to spit upon him, to cry shame upon him, and thus to dishearten him for the rest of the road? Would their father look with favour on a brother who had behaved in such a manner? Would it not be the part of a brother to help up him who had fallen, to cheer him, and to give him an arm to lean on until he had recovered his strength? So do ye, when any brother offends. Comfort him; help him out of the strait; pray to God to help him, and to blot out his sin, so that his name may again be hallowed in the life of his faithful servant.

Such, my brethren, is the meaning of this great petition, when taken in its full extent and import. We pray, that an abundant crop of holiness may

spring up in every quarter of the earth. But while we pray this for others, surely we ought also to pray that it should spring and grow up and ripen and bear fruit in our own bosoms. Sanctify the Lord God therefore in your hearts; sanctify him in your lives; remembering that it must be a mere mockery, every time you say the Lord's Prayer, to beg God to make you holy, if you are dishallowing and dishonouring him all the while by continuing wilfully in sin.

SERMON XIII.

LORD'S PRAYER:

THIRD PART.

GOD'S THREEFOLD KINGDOM.

LUKE xi. 2.

Thy kingdom come.

AFTER the petition that God's name may be hallowed, we are taught to pray for the coming of his kingdom. Now what is this kingdom, the coming of which our Lord thus commands us to ask and wish for? The kingdom of God, so far as we have any concern with it in this prayer,—so far as it is still to come, and therefore must be something different from that rule and dominion which he is always exercising over every part of his creation,—the kingdom of God, for the coming of which we are to pray, is a threefold

kingdom. There is his kingdom and authority over the souls of all true believers; which we will call his spiritual kingdom. There is his kingdom upon earth, or his Church; which we will call his visible kingdom; because it is visible to all men, and all may see it. Lastly, there is his heavenly kingdom, which is to come after the resurrection, and to last for ever. Now with each of these three kingdoms we have all a greal deal to do.

We have to do with Christ's spiritual kingdom: because, if he does not first reign in us, he will never reign over us, at least with our own consent. If he does not begin with ruling our hearts, he will never rule our actions, except it be by putting a bit in our mouths, and forcing us to go this way or that, and to do his purpose against our wills. Now concerning this kingdom of God in the soul of man, which I have called his spiritual kingdom, there is a very remarkable text in the 17th chapter of St Luke; where our Lord, on being asked by some of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God would come, said to them "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you." As though he had said to them, "You are merely wasting your time in looking about for the kingdom of God, as if it was to be

some great and wonderful sight, which you were to see with the eyes of the body. Look within: look whether God is reigning there: look whether he is the master and owner of your hearts. If he is, then you may rest satisfied; for then his kingdom is within you." This kingdom of God, which is, or ought to be, founded and established in the heart of every one of us, is what I mean, when I speak of his spiritual kingdom; and surely we have all to do with that.

But we have also to do with God's visible kingdom, that is to say, with the Church of Christ. Of this blessed institution it would require the tongue of a prophet or an apostle to speak worthily. It is the best and most glorious thing on earth. Our Lord, as St Paul tells us, purchased it with his own blood: he hallowed it with his Spirit: he taught it by his apostles: ever since his death he has continued to watch over it, and to keep it from the powers of darkness, down to the present day: and he still enlightens and guides it by his word and by his ministers, and enriches it with his sacraments and with his grace. Such is God's visible kingdom, which our Lord left behind him to serve him, and to bear witness of him upon earth. This is the city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid. It is the city of Zion, a fair place, and the joy of the whole earth, in whose courts

God is known for a sure refuge. But, if this be God's visible kingdom, who are the people of it? We are. We, and every other person who has entered into a covenant with God and Christ by baptizm, who acknowledges the truth of his holy word, and professes to receive Christ as his Lord and Saviour,—we are all the people of that sacred kingdom. Therefore our dissenting brethren belong to it as well as we. They, like ourselves, are baptized into the faith of Jesus: they, like ourselves, profess to take the Bible for their guide: they, like ourselves, own Jesus for their Lord and Saviour. Therefore it would be unjust and uncharitable to deny that they are God's people as well as we. Whether they act like his people, in separating from their brethren on such small grounds as most of them bring against us, is another question, which I will not speak of now. Suffice it, that, whatever the more violent of them may say against us, we return not railing for railing. Though they have gone away from us, and left us, and so made a division in the land, let us still acknowledge them to be our brethren, and gladly allow them to be a part of God's people. Such is God's visible kingdom. We of the Church of England form one portion of it; the Dissenters form another portion of it; the Roman Catholics form a third, though a very corrupt portion. In

a word, wherever Christ is worshipt, wherever his sacraments are administered, wherever salvation is preached through faith in him, there is a branch of the Church of Christ, there is a portion of God's visible kingdom, which, as David sings in the 48th Psalm, is appointed to be the joy of the whole earth.

Moreover we have also to do with God's heavenly kingdom, that kingdom which is promised to Christ's faithful people, that kingdom where God Almighty, after executing judgement on the wicked, and rooting out all the workers of iniquity, and destroying sin and death, will reign for ever over his obedient children in a new world of righteousness and glory.

Such is God's threefold or triple kingdom: and it is for the coming of this threefold kingdom that we are taught to pray, by saying, Thy kingdom come. Let us keep this well in mind: when we are uttering these words in our daily prayers, let us recollect their meaning, and remember what we are asking for. Let us recollect that we are asking God to fix his spiritual kingdom in our hearts. This is a great petition, and well worth pondering. Let us further recollect that we are asking him to increase and enlarge and strengthen his visible kingdom. Here is another great petition. Lastly, let us recollect

that we are expressing a wish for the coming of his heavenly kingdom, where no evil of any kind will be allowed to set foot, and where only holiness will enter. Here is another wonderful petition, and perhaps the most worth pondering of all.

In the first place, when you say, Thy kingdom come, you are asking your heavenly Father to fix his spiritual kingdom in your hearts. This, I said, is a great petition, and well worth pondering. For just consider what it comes to, if you take it in its full meaning. It amounts to beseeching your heavenly Father to come to you and reign in your souls. Now do you really wish this? If not, why do you ask for it? But if you do wish for it, as every true Christian should, remember, it is not a small thing you are asking. It is not a small thing to invite the King of kings to come in all his robes of holiness and righteousness, to fix his throne within you. What preparation have you made to receive so great a visiter? Have you done the little you can do, by sweeping and garnishing the chambers of your hearts, and trying to cleanse them from everything which you know would be offensive in his sight? You would not ask the king of England to a dirty house: nor should you ask God to a sinful heart, unless it be that he may purify it for

himself by the cleansing of his Holy Spirit. If indeed you are conscious how little you can do for yourself, after trying your very best,—if by sad experience you have been taught your own weakness, and cry to God from the bottom of a throbbing heart, Lord, I am unclean, cleanse thou my uncleanness,—your God and Father will not disdain your prayers. But meantime you must do your very best. You must at least cleanse the outside of the platter; for that is in your power. You must break off every evil practice, give up every sinful indulgence, and strive,—it is our Saviour's own word,—you must strive to do your duty to the utmost of your present powers and knowledge. This is the way to have your prayer for God's spiritual presence in your heart and soul answered: for so it is written: "He that keepeth my commandment, he loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." As though our Saviour had said, "If a man will really do his best,—not that sleepy doing one's best, which people talk about, and which in fact is doing nothing,—but if a man will do his best in good earnest to obey God, and strive, as people strive when their life is at stake, and their hearts are in their work,—then (says Christ, concerning that man) I will accept his earnest endea-

vours as a proof of love, and I will come to him, and will manifest myself to him. I will make him understand the beauty and the excellency of the perfect law of God. I will enable him to see and feel my goodness in dying to save him. I will open the eyes of his mind to perceive and comprehend that wonderful scheme of redemption, by which God's mercy has free room given to it, without the slightest infringement of his holiness. I will shew him all these truths, and bring them home to him." And now mark what follows. "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him; and we will come to him, and make our abode with him." The shewing forth of Christ's goodness is here supposed to produce its due effect on the man who is truly desirous of obeying God. It kindles love in him. He begins to love Christ. As a natural consequence of that love, he begins to keep Christ's words, both by striving to obey them, by endeavouring to do whatever Christ has commanded him to do,—and also by studying them, and poring over them, and trying to dive deeper and deeper into their meaning, that he may fish up the goodly pearls which lie at the bottom of all our Lord's sayings. Thus the man advances from obeying God's law to loving Christ, and from loving Christ to delighting in his Gospel, until at

last he becomes godly; and so God loves him, and comes to him, and makes his abode with him.

This, my brethren, is the only way in which your prayer to your heavenly Father to come and establish his spiritual kingdom within you can be fulfilled. You must begin with obedience, and persevere in it until Christ shall be pleased to manifest himself to you. Thence will spring love, and an anxious desire to please him; which will carry you on in time to godliness. It is scarcely necessary for me to warn you that no step can be taken in all this to any good purpose without the help of the Spirit, and that this help must be sought by constant and diligent prayer. It will be more to the purpose to remind you that, after the first step, after the first snapping of the chain of sinful habit, the whole of the work I have been describing is gradual. It comes not by observation. It is a growth: so that you must not look for violent or sudden changes in yourself. Only be anxious to be always moving forward. Remember that the waters of the stream, however slowly they may at times appear to move, yet by never stopping on their journey are sure to reach the great sea. Let your progress toward godliness be like that of the gentle stream, which neither murmurs, nor chafes, nor dashes against its banks, but keeps ever flowing on and on, until it has fulfilled the task

which God has set it, and loses its own littleness by mingling with the mighty waters.

But beside praying for the establishment of God's spiritual kingdom in our own hearts, we are also to pray for the increase and enlargement of his visible kingdom upon earth; I mean his Church. For, though that kingdom be already come in some degree, it has hitherto come in part only, and not wholly. Many nations are still without the Gospel. Many parts of every great nation are still without it. Even in our own land, who can doubt that there are thousands upon thousands, especially in large towns, who know next to nothing of God and Christ, thousands who never set foot in a place of worship, who never hear of God except in oaths, and never speak of him except to take his name in vain? Can the kingdom of God be said in any just sense to have come to such people as these? Therefore we have still great reason to pray that God's kingdom may be extended to the nations who are still beyond the pale of it, and also that it may be strengthened and acknowledged more and more in the countries where it is already established. But God works by human means and human hands. Therefore, in praying for the enlargement of Christ's kingdom, we are in fact praying for God's blessing on the labours of all who are endeavouring to spread

the Gospel among the heathens and Turks and Jews. So, in praying for the strengthening of Christ's kingdom, we pray to God to prosper all attempts which may be made in this and other christian lands, by preaching and teaching, by building churches, by founding and supporting schools, by distributing the word of God and other pious books, to bring the ignorant and the wicked to a knowledge of their Lord and King. Now here again I ask you, do you really wish for this? Do you really wish to see the day come, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the whole earth with the same depth and fulness as the waters cover the sea? so that, go where you will, you shall not find a spot where Christ's authority is not fully acknowledged. Do you indeed wish for this, as well as ask for it? If so, you will do something to hasten on that happy day, beside praying. *Thy kingdom come* is but three words. To say these three words night and morning is hardly enough for the least among you to give toward the bringing about of so blessed an object. You ought to give something more, and that for the best of reasons,—because you can. I would therefore advise every one of those among you who live by their own labour, if he really has the coming of God's visible kingdom at heart, to lay by something,—say a penny a month,—as an

offering to God, to shew your sincerity and earnestness in the good cause. This will make a shilling a year: and you may give it at the year's end to one among the many societies established in this land for pious purposes.

Let none say within himself, What good will a shilling do? If it could do no other good, it would shew your good will: it would shew your readiness to make a sacrifice for the sake of Christ's kingdom. For you who are poor can give nothing in alms, without feeling it. Those who are well off in the world, give out of their abundance. A few shillings more or less make little or no difference to them: they give, and never miss them. But with the poor it is not so. If a poor man lays by a shilling for godly purposes, he must take it from himself. He must give up some little indulgence, he must stint himself in something or other, before he can afford himself the pleasure of giving alms. This is why every good man values the charitable offerings of the poor so much: because theirs is real giving; and with such giving, when it springs from right motives, from thankfulness and love to God, and goodwill to their fellow men, the high and mighty God is well pleased. Even therefore if I thought that the shillings of the poor were likely to be of little use in furthering the increase of God's kingdom, I would still

say, lay by your pennies, and give your shillings, for your own sakes, that you may enjoy the satisfaction of laying by, and the pleasure of giving, for such a purpose. But it is a great mistake to fancy that the alms of the poor cannot tell. Though they cannot give much, yet, if they were all to give a little, their great numbers would more than make up for the smallness of their gifts. Assuredly there are at least a million of persons in England, who never give anything toward such purposes, and who might easily give a shilling apiece every year. Now a million shillings is fifty thousand pounds. What might not be done by such a sum, if it were employed in building churches, or schools, or in whatsoever manner, for the strengthening and enlarging of God's kingdom? A chapel that would hold many more people than this church, might be built for a thousand pounds: so that fifty well-sized chapels might be built every year out of these shillings of the poor: and thus in a few years there would not be a nook in all England in which God had not a house.

To shew what might be done by the poor in a good cause, let me tell you what is done daily in a bad cause. You know who are the drinkers of ardent spirits. It is not generally the rich, nor, in England, the country-poor. In Scotland and Ireland indeed the case is different: there, alas!

the curse of drinking spirits is to be seen in the country as well as the towns. But in England it is confined for the most part to the manufacturers and mechanics, and the rest of the poorer classes in the towns. Yet how much do you suppose is spent daily for ardent spirits on an average throughout these kingdoms? Fifty thousand pounds! fifty thousand pounds a-day for gin! Such is the power of small sums when laid out for evil purposes. So much more active and zealous in their generation are the children of this world than the children of light. It seems a very great thing to think it possible that the labouring poor should in the course of a year give to God a sum no greater than what the gin-drinkers give every day to their god. For the gin-drinker's god is his belly: and to that god, to a mad and devilish thirst for strong drink, he gives not his money merely, but often his clothes, his peace of mind, the decency of his children, the comforts of his home, and, it is far too probable, in most cases his immortal soul into the bargain. Such is the god of drink. Did Moloch, who delighted in human blood, require more horrible sacrifices? Whereas your gift, the gift I am advising you to make, if it were offered in a right spirit, in a humble love of God, and an earnest desire for the coming of his kingdom, would be attended with peace and joy: and he who ap-

proved of the widow's mite, would also look with favour on your monthly penny. This of course I say only to those among you who earn their own livelihood by their labour. From the old and infirm who live upon charity, I would not wish it. On the other hand, from those whom God has blest with greater plenty, his mercies surely deserve that out of their abundance they should offer more. But whether you are richer, or whether you are poorer, I would press on you the duty of setting by something every year, specially for religious purposes, as a token of your thankfulness to your heavenly Father for his having brought you to a knowledge of his will, while so many others are in darkness and ignorance.

There is another method however, beside subscribing to religious purposes, by which every head of a family may bear part in establishing God's visible kingdom on earth: and that is by establishing it in his own family. If every family in the world were visibly christian, the world would be christian: and till every family in the world is visibly christian, the whole world cannot be christian, the kingdom of God cannot be fully come. In families, as well as in nations, should the worship of God be set up visibly. So well aware of this were the heathens, that, in addition to their national or country gods, they used

also to have their household gods, to which they prayed in their own dwellings, and burnt incense on their own hearths. Shall the heathens give such heed to the duty of consecrating every family to some heavenly power? and shall we, who have been taught to know the true God, neglect to consecrate our families to him? Shall they pay more worship to their false gods, than we pay to the God of heaven? Set up the worship of God and Christ then visibly in your families. Let every house be a church: and let all who dwell in it be a congregation holy to the Lord. Remember, Christ's promise is, that, wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be amongst them. Let prayers be regularly offered up, at least once a day, in your assembled family; and wherever a reader can be found, let a few verses of the Gospel be read aloud, as part of the service. So will you shew yourselves to be desirous of the coming of God's visible kingdom: so will you visibly consecrate your families to Christ, and enthrone him in your dwellings as your king.

Moreover, as I said above, in praying that God's kingdom may come, we utter a wish for the coming of his heavenly kingdom: and this, I told you, is perhaps the most worth pondering of all the petitions I have been speaking of. For, when God's heavenly kingdom comes, evil ends, sin is punish-

ed, and holiness alone survives. Everything but penitence and faith and love must be swept away and disappear, at that great and terrible coming of our Lord to judge the world. Now do we really wish for the coming of that great day? Should we be glad to know it was to come to-morrow? If an angel were to shew himself at this moment, and to bring a message from our Lord and Master, that to-night at twelve o'clock he will descend from heaven, with the voice of the archangel, with the trump of God, and that we are to be straightway caught up into the clouds, and to appear to-morrow before the judgement-seat of Christ, to give an account of our past lives, —if such a message were to be brought to us at this moment, should we rejoice at it? Yet this, and nothing short of this, is the coming of God's heavenly kingdom. I fear, there are very very few men who can say from the bottom of their hearts, that for themselves, without thinking of their neighbours, they would be truly and heartily glad of this. I am sure, for one, I could not say it. I could not say that I desire without a moment's further preparation to be hurried before Christ's tribunal. My prayer would be the same as David's: O spare me a little! And your prayer, brethren, would doubtless be the same. And it would not be a formal, lifeless, dull, unmeaning

prayer. You would begin to pray, on hearing such a message, as you never prayed before in your lives.

But if this be so, if the instant coming of Christ's heavenly kingdom would be so appalling to us, why are we taught to pray for it? We are taught so, to keep us mindful of it. We are taught so, as a warning of what must happen to us, whether we pray for it or no. We are taught so, as a lesson to shew us what we ought to be, and what, as true Christians, we ought to wish for. For it is not the part of a true Christian to be fearful of his Saviour's coming. If we did not sinfully and shamefully come short of that high estate to which Christ purposed to raise his people, we should long for Christ's coming, instead of dreading it. What does St John say at the end of the Revelation, when Jesus tells him that he will come quickly? Does he shrink from the thought? does he beg his Lord to delay his coming? On the contrary he says, "Amen! even so come, Lord Jesus!" that is, come as thou hast said: make no long tarrying: hasten to set thy servants free from the warfare which Satan is waging against them. Such is St John's language: and what does St Paul say? That to him "to die is gain;" that he has "a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better" (Phil. i. 21—23). My brethren, if

we had the spirit of St John and St Paul,—and I know no reason for our not having it, except that we pray less, and strive less against temptation, and have less faith, and less love—if we had the true christian spirit which burnt so brightly in those first Christians, we too should desire to depart and to be with Christ: we too should feel that to die is gain: we too should cry, as they did, Lord Jesus, come quickly!

SERMON XIV.

LORD'S PRAYER.

FOURTH PART.

GOD'S WILL, NOT OURS.

LUKE xi. 2.

Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

IN my last sermon I spoke to you about the nature of God's kingdom, for the coming of which our Lord teaches us to pray. I shewed you that it was a threefold kingdom. I explained to you that, when we say, Thy kingdom come, we pray first for God's spiritual kingdom, that it may be set up and established in our hearts; secondly, for his visible kingdom, or Church, that it may increase and spread, until it fill the whole earth; and lastly, for his heavenly kingdom, that it may soon drive away and put an end to every kind of sin and sor-

row, and leave nothing to be seen in the new heavens and the new earth, which God will then create, but a glorious God, filling all things with his presence, and ruling with a father's love over his dutiful and holy children. In a word, when we say, Thy kingdom come, we pray God to put forth his royal power, and to shew himself the sovereign of all the earth so plainly and openly, that we and all the other sons of men may, both outwardly with our eyes, and inwardly in our hearts, see and feel and own him to be our king.

But a king must have subjects. A king without subjects to obey him, a king without a people to love and follow him, would be a sorry sight. He would be merely the mockery of a king, and no more a real one, than a shadow is a living man. It is not enough therefore that we call God King, and Jesus Lord, unless we do the things which they command us. It is not enough for God's kingdom to come, in fact it cannot come properly and as it ought to come, it cannot come in all its fulness and excellence, unless God's will be also done. This however is so unpleasant to man,—this doing God's will is so hard and grating to flesh and blood, especially in the beginning of our course,—that perhaps there is no truth in the whole Gospel which we are readier and more anxious to forget, than this great one, that it is

doing, and not saying only, that God requires of us. The promises of the Gospel are great and glorious; and we are glad to lay claim to them. The forms of religion may seem a little tiresome to us: still we cannot feel comfortable, if we keep away from them altogether; and so we bring ourselves not to neglect them. But the doing God's will as he would have us,—though this, you must be aware, is the pith and kernel of the whole matter,—the doing it wholly and thoroughly, at all times and in all places, the obeying God with that perfect obedience which he demands of us,—an obedience which extends to all our words and thoughts, as well as to all our outward actions,—an obedience which brings every power of our minds, and every feeling of our hearts, and every member of our bodies, under ready subjection to the will of God,—this is the great difficulty which stops so many in their christian journey. It is like a great steep mountain, which blocks up the road to heaven: and some of us waste our time in trying to find a path round it; and some of us fall asleep at the foot of it; and some of us in despair turn our backs on it, and set our faces toward the way of sin and death: but few, very few have the wisdom and the courage to say within themselves, "The city of our God and King is at the top of that steep mountain: un-

less I climb the mountain, I can never get there: so the sooner I begin the better. True, the mountain does seem very steep now that I am looking up it from the bottom: but the ascent may not be so difficult as it appears: and at any rate, in the strength of my God and King, and through faith in Jesus Christ, the Bible assures me I can do all things. Therefore I will begin to climb at once." Few persons have wisdom and courage enough to make up their minds to follow the will of God in this plain straightforward manner. Most men want to avoid it if they can. Some would compound for their duty, by keeping God's law whenever they have a mind to it, or whenever they are not particularly tempted to the contrary; or perhaps they might consent to keep the greater part of it, provided they are allowed to indulge now and then in some little darling sin. But the trying to keep the whole of the perfect law of God, the endeavour to act up to all the heavenly precepts delivered in the Sermon on the Mount, this is so distasteful to flesh and blood, we have need to be continually reminded that God will not be satisfied with less. Therefore Christ has taken care to remind us of it, by making it a part of our daily prayers. He has commanded us, when we pray, to say, not only, Thy kingdom come, but also, Thy will be done.

This indeed is the petition with which we have the closest concern. It shews us what ought to be the great aim and end of our lives,—that we may be able to do the will of God. After praying to our Father that his name may be hallowed, and that his kingdom may come, we pray that his will may be done: for unless his will be done, his kingdom cannot come, his name cannot be hallowed. Or can a father be said to be honoured by his children, while they are disobeying him? Can a king be said to reign over his subjects, while they are rebelling against him? Here I would have you mark our Lord's word. He does not bid us pray that God's laws may be obeyed, or that his commandments may be kept, but that his will may be done. Now why is this? Plainly, because the doing God's will embraces everything else. It includes all obedience and submission and patience and humility, the virtues most desirable in a Christian. Besides, by teaching us to pray that God's will may be done, or, in other words, by teaching us that we are to strive to make God's will our own, which of course is the thing meant, Jesus struck at the taproot of the evil in our fallen and corrupted nature. The great mischief of the fall of Adam was, that it burst the golden chain which bound man to God. Man broke loose from God, and made himself independent of

him, and left the safe and the straight way of his commandments, to walk in the light of his own eyes, and after the devices of his own heart. In short, man at the fall set up his own will against God's; and so his will became corrupt and tainted, as everything must become when God's purifying spirit leaves it. Man set up his own will. This is the great disease and the main evil of our nature. It comes to us from our parents: it shews itself soon after our birth: and the seeds of it continue to lurk, even in the best of men, as long as they remain in the body.

The disease, I say, shews itself soon after our birth. If you doubt this, look at infants. Mark how violent and fretful they become, even while they are still in arms, if you do the least thing to cross them. But perhaps you will say, "They are only babies, and don't know any better." Well! wait till they do know better: wait till they are five or six years old. Is the matter improved then? You know that, generally speaking, it is not. You know that your complaint of your child of six years old is the same that it was at fifteen months: "The child will have its own way." You are quite right, the child will have its own way, unless you take great pains to teach it better. And when it grows up to be a boy, it will try to have its own way as a boy: and when it grows up to be

a man, it will try to have its own way as a man. Nay, at threescore and ten, if God spares its life so long, unless its heart has been renewed beforehand, we should still have the very same story: we should still see the old man, with white hairs on his head, and a crutch in his hand, and one foot in the grave,—if we could read his heart, we should still see him making a point of having his own way.

Another proof of the same thing, were further proof needful, might be found in the common saying, "I will do it, because I choose it," . . . . not because I think it right, not because I shall do myself any good by it, but because I choose it: that is, because it is my will, and I have the power of doing it, and nobody shall hinder me. A foolisher answer than this, or a worse answer, or an answer more unworthy of a Christian, or even of a reasonable being, there cannot be. Yet I dare say most of you must have heard it. I have myself often heard it made by boys. And though men, when they are grown up, are mostly too much on their guard to avow so absurd a feeling, yet the same love of doing a thing merely because one chooses it, without any better reason, is far too common among men also: in truth, it lies at the bottom of half the foolish obstinacy in the world. But it is useless to argue the matter further. It is

a question of mere fact; every one, without argument, may decide it for himself by looking into his own heart. Ask yourselves, Do not you like to have your own way, because it is your own way? and that too even when some other way, which a neighbour points out to you, is clearly more for your good.

Now what is the cause of all this? What is the cause of this desire, which shews itself in us at all the different stages of life, from the earliest down to the latest? What is the origin of this distempered feeling, which stands us in stead of reason, and which will often lead a man to act against his plain interest? The cause is that unreasonable and corrupt self will, which we have all inherited from Adam, which shews itself differently in different men, but which in some way or other is sure to show itself in every one not thoroughly converted.

Having thus found out the cause of the disorder, we may more easily see how it is to be cured. We must get rid of that cause: we must root out that self will, which is the source of the whole evil. We must take God's will for our rule and guide, and must endeavour by all the means in our power, by prayer, by meditation, by selfdenial, to bring our own will first into complete obedience to God's, and then to make it one with God's. We must

learn to look upon our own wills as impious and rebellious, because they set themselves in opposition to God. We must learn to look upon them as mad, because they set themselves in opposition to reason. We must learn to look upon them as tyrants, because they govern us absolutely, without law, and against law. This mad, rebellious, impious tyranny of the will must not be allowed to trample on us any longer. It must be overthrown: which can only be done by setting up God's will in its place. Accordingly this is the very remedy which Jesus Christ has pointed out to us, by teaching us to pray to our heavenly Father that his will, and not ours, may be done. Remember then, when you are making this petition to God, you are in fact asking him to cure the great disorder of your nature, and to remedy the evil brought upon you by Adam's fall. By that fall our wills were cut off from God's; and the evil and mischief can never be done away, until they are joined to God's will again.

I said a while ago that the doing God's will includes obedience, and submission, and patience, and several other christian graces. At first perhaps, when we say, Thy will be done, we think only of that portion of God's will which is to be done by us, such as keeping his commandments, and doing our duty toward him, and toward

our neighbour. But there is another portion of God's will, which must also be taken into account. I mean that portion of it which is done toward us, and which exercises our patience and our faith, as that portion of it which is to be done by us, exercises our obedience and activity. Most of us are ready to acknowledge, when any extraordinary affliction or unforeseen accident befalls us, that it comes from God. In seasons of sorrow, or of grievous sickness, nothing is commoner than to hear the sufferer say, "It is the will of God, and I must bow to it." Now though this is good and right, as far as it goes, it does not go far enough. It is like the fault of the Syrians, who said, "Jehovah is God of the hills; but he is not God of the vallies" (1 Kings xx. 28). So we are apt to speak and think of the Lord our God, as if he were God only of death, and sickness, and the greater visitations or escapes of life, but not God of the daily wants and common business of our calling. The Lord is God of the small things, just as truly as he is God of the great things. He orders and appoints and controlls them all, as seems to him most fitting. If we were duly aware of this, we should recognize the voice of God, and see his hand, in our calling and station. Therefore, instead of wishing to be something different from what we are, we should be satisfied that he has

placed us all in the stations best suited to our characters. We, my friends, live here away from the world, and in comparative obscurity. Shall we repine thereat? No: it was God who set us here. Let us feel grateful to him for having sheltered us from the cares and temptations of more exposed spots, and be careful to make our light shine in a dark place. Others are raised to eminence, or born to live amid the bustle of the world. Shall they say within themselves, "We could serve God better somewhere else, with fewer cares to distract us, and fewer temptations to assail us?" No: they too must recollect that they are set to be lights upon a hill, by the same hand which has set us in the valley. They cannot change, they ought not to wish to change their station, any more than we ought to wish to change ours. Let each endeavour to do God's will, by filling his own station, if it be lowly, with contentment, if it be lofty, with humility: and the higher they are placed, the more careful let them be to make their light so shine before men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven.

Thus have I set before you the duty of sacrificing our wills to the will of God, not merely by doing his will, but by suffering his will, with faith and submission and contentment. It only remains

for me to speak to you of the measure and degree in which God's will ought to be done by us,—namely, as it is done in heaven. The measure which Christ lays down for us is always an infinite measure, and the pattern is always a heavenly pattern. As Moses was commanded to make the tabernacle for the children of Israel in all things according to the pattern shewn to him in the mount, so we too are to frame the tabernacle of our christian life, and all things belonging thereto, according to the perfect model of heaven. We are to pray, and to strive, that God's will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven. That is, we are to do it, as the angels do it, wholly, readily, cheerfully, and out of the love of God. We are to do it wholly; for who can fancy an angel leaving any part of his errand unperformed? We are to do it readily; for they are winged messengers, and run swift as thought to do God's bidding. We are to do it cheerfully, and with the hearts of angels, which are the abodes of joy and gladness. The mere doing God's will is little. The devils themselves, we may be sure, will be constrained to go as far as that. Only, while the angels do it with joy, and find all their happiness in doing it, the evil spirits do it unwillingly, and would fain shake it off if they could. So that, unless we bring our hearts to do God's will cheerfully, we cannot

be said to do it as the angels do it, we cannot be said to do it as it is done in heaven. Above all we must do it out of the love of God, for his glory, and not for our own. Glory to God in the highest, was the song of the angels at our Saviour's birth. The glory of God then is their great object; the love of God is their chief motive. It is only by the union of love with duty, that the will of God can be done as it is in heaven, where he rules in the sight of all, and issues his commands as it seems good to his eternal wisdom. The angels leave their places before the sapphire throne at God's bidding. They are his servants, and run to and fro whithersoever he sends them: and they go joyfully, deeming it a blessing to be charged with the least of his commands. Have we anything of this feeling about us? Do not say that it is above the measure of earth, that flesh and blood cannot know it. Many a good soldier has felt in this manner toward a great and beloved commander: many a loyal subject has so felt toward his king. And is not God our king? Is not the Captain of our salvation our commander? Let us feel toward him as his subjects and soldiers, happy to be employed by him, ready to obey him, active in his service, but at the same time prepared to endure hardships, to stand still at our post, to bear the taunts and reproaches of the enemy, whenever he

orders us to do so. I once read a story of a great captain, who after a battle was talking over the events of the day with his officers. He asked them, who had done best that day? Some mentioned one man who had fought very bravely, some another. "No (said he) you are all mistaken: the best man in the field to-day was a soldier, who had his arm lifted up against an enemy, but who, on hearing the trumpet sound a retreat, checked himself, and dropt his arm without striking the blow. That perfect and ready obedience to the will of his general is the noblest thing that has been done to-day." Think over this story, my brethren; endeavour to obey God in all things, as that soldier obeyed his general; and you will find out in time what our Saviour meant by commanding us to pray that God's will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

He meant what he himself did. For, as by coming down from his glory to take our nature upon him, he shewed how earth might be lifted up into heaven, so by his activity in doing, and by his meekness in suffering God's will, he shewed how his Father's will might be done on earth as it is in heaven. Look at his diligence in doing that will, which was so great that he had not time so much as to eat: look at his devotion to it, which

made the doing it meat and drink to him: think how careful he was to set forth and exalt, not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him: call to mind the lowliness and patience, and the readiness to suffer as well as to do his Father's will, which he shewed throughout his blessed passion, so that even in the moment of that fearful agony the only cry that burst from his troubled spirit was, "Father, not my will, but thine be done!" Such was the example he left us, that we might walk in his steps, both in our doing and in our praying. Remember therefore, that when you pray to God that his will may be done, you pray the very prayer which our Lord prayed. Remember that, when you pray that it may be done on earth as it is done in heaven, you are in fact praying that you may be enabled to do it as perfectly as Jesus Christ did: for he came down from heaven. Take him for your model; and, as he came down to shew you how God's will should be done, so will the Holy Ghost come down, if you pray for him, and enable you to do it. So long as your lives are continued to you, God will be with you on earth; and death itself will not separate you. Rather will it unite you to the Godhead by new and closer bonds. For Christ will then lift you up, and take you to himself, that, where he is, you may be also, beholding his glory, partaking in his

joys, and continuing to do the work which you began on earth, continuing to do God's will, but without the hinderance and alloy of human weakness and earthly imperfections, in the eternal peace of heaven.

SERMON XV.

LORD'S PRAYER:

FIFTH PART.

DAILY BREAD.

LUKE xi. 3.

Give us day by day our daily bread.

THE Lord's Prayer, I have already told you, may be divided into four chief parts. The first part is the address, or invocation; in which we call upon God as our heavenly Father, and try, as it were, to catch his gracious ear. The second part consists of three petitions to God,—such as it befits loving children and dutiful subjects to make,—for the advancement of his honour, and the shewing forth of his glory,—that his name may be hallowed, that his kingdom may come, and that his will may be done as perfectly and readily and heartily

on earth, as it is done in heaven. Having already spoken to you of these two parts, I will now go on to the third part, which is made up of petitions for the relief of our own necessities and wants both in body and soul. There is a petition in it for food, a petition for pardon, a petition to be kept out of temptation, a petition to be preserved from evil of every kind. In the present sermon we will confine ourselves to the first of these, the petition for food: Give us day by day our daily bread.

These words are very plain and simple: yet what a depth of meaning lies on their very surface! How much may we gather from them! how much may we learn from them! Almost every word supplies a lesson.

In the first place, we may all learn, from this petition of the Lord's Prayer, to look on every thing that we enjoy as the gift of God,—a gift we are humbly to ask for, as regularly as the day comes. All, I say, may learn this. For our Lord makes no distinction about the offering up of this prayer. He does not say, that the poor are to make this petition, and that those who are well off in the world need not. He does not say, that only those who are old, or infirm, or out of employment, and who therefore cannot support themselves, are to ask God for their daily bread. But he says to all,—to rich as well as poor,—to those who are

earning their livelihood by their labour, or who are living on their means, just as much as to those who depend entirely on others,—nobleman and pauper, he says to all alike, "When ye pray, say, Give us day by day our daily bread."

This may perhaps sound a hard saying to the wealthy and proud man; and he might easily be tempted to think within himself,—"What need can there be for my asking God to give me my daily bread, when I have plenty of everything already?" But to such a man I would answer,—If you have plenty of everything, who gave you that plenty? Did not God give it you? And cannot the same God take it away from you, whenever he thinks fit? Is he not for ever shewing that he can make poor, just as easily as he makes rich? that he can throw a man down from a high station, just as suddenly as he raises him up to it? This is not a matter that calls for any great stretch of faith: your memory, if you look into it, will prove to you that such is the case. Are you a merchant? Call to mind how many merchants and traders and dealers of all kinds, who were thriving amain a short time back, are now become bankrupt? Are you a farmer of land, or owner of it? Remember the distress and dismay that weighed down the landholders of England ten or twelve years ago. How many persons who had always passed for

prosperous, and who perhaps thought themselves as firm and as deeply rooted as the trees on their estates, were swept away in those years as by a great storm! Why should not those times return? Why should there not be another panic, like that of the terrible winter, which we all remember seven years back, and which shook the wealth of England to its foundations? Who keeps off such seasons of calamity, seasons when hundreds awoke in the morning, believing themselves rich and flourishing, and by sunset were brought down to beggary? who keeps off such fearful seasons from sweeping us away too, as many better men were then swept away? Who, I ask, prevents all this, but God? Think of the cold rainy summers, when the husbandman sows his seed in vain. Think of the distress which may be caused in a whole neighbourhood by the stoppage of a single bank. Think of the losses which men so often meet with from the carelessness, the dishonesty, the misfortunes of their friends and agents: to say nothing of those manifold casualties and accidents, which so often come unexpectedly athwart the plans of such as put their trust in their own wisdom.

I might add, that there is yet another way of parting the man of substance and his possessions. Instead of taking his house and land from him, God can easily take him from his house and land.

Most of you must remember our Saviour's parable of the rich man, who said within himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." You must remember too how all this ended. "God said to him, Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose will those things be?" For when a man dies, he can carry nothing away with him. Death tears him away from his money; and he is forced to leave it behind him, it may be for a stranger, or perhaps for a spendthrift to squander.

Since there are so many ways then in which a rich man and his money may be parted,—by death, by losses in trade, by bad seasons, by accidents of divers kinds, by the misconduct or mischances of others,—it is plain that the rich man is just as truly a pensioner on his heavenly Father, as the poorest who lives from hand to mouth. He is a pensioner on God to the full amount of his prosperity: and the continuance of his pension, the continuance of his prosperity, depends wholly on God's will. He had no claim to his riches at the first: but God gave it to him of his own good pleasure. He has no claim or title to it now: but God continues it to him of the same good pleasure: and whenever God sees fit, he can and will take it all away. Surely then, in proportion as our money

increases, our feeling of our utter dependence on God ought also to increase and grow stronger: and our prayers should become more frequent, and more pressing, that God will teach us to put our money to its right use, so that it may indeed prove a blessing to us, and not a snare.

But if even those, who according to outward appearances have plenty of goods in store, ought to pray for their daily bread, great reason have they to do the same who live by their own industry. For if you had not health and strength to labour, what would become of the stoutest man amongst you? Yet who gave you your health and your strength? or who keeps you in the free use of it? You know, it is God, who preserves you in health and strength: and in giving you the power of earning your bread, he gives you the bread itself; just as a man who gave you money to buy your food, might be said to give you the food. So that all, whether rich or poor,—whether living on their own means, or supporting themselves by their labour, or supported by the charity of others,—all of us depend upon God: all have equal reason, when we pray, to say, Give us this day our daily bread.

This then is the first lesson for us to learn from the text, the lesson of our entire dependence on our heavenly Father for all the good things of this

life: and this is a lesson which we ought to learn by heart, as the phrase is. We must not be content to say, "Yes, it is very true, we do depend upon God,"—and then think no more about it: we must try to gain such a lively feeling of this truth, and so to work it into our minds, that it may give a colour and character to all our views of the present and the future. This is St Jameses precept: "Go to, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and stay there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. Instead whereof ye ought to say, If the Lord will, ye shall live, and do this, or that." That is, in all your plans, in all your doings, you ought to take God into account. As the sailor says he will sail on such a day, wind and weather permitting,—not using these as words of course, but meaning what he says, and well knowing that, if the weather is rough and the wind in his teeth, he cannot put out to sea; so should we say sincerely and heartily to ourselves, whenever we purpose to do anything, "If God pleases, I will do so and so: and if it does not please God, it shall not please me." You will not easily guess, without making the trial, how free of the world and all its concerns a man becomes, by forming this habit of referring all things to God, and looking for everything to his good pleasure.

It does not lead us to sloth, as some might fancy. The good Christian is just as industrious as other men: but he is industrious unto God. He does not look for miracles to be wrought, in order that he may eat the bread of idleness. He knows that, if he does not work, neither shall he eat. He knows that it is his duty to provide for his household. Whatever his business may be, he follows it with a sober, steady diligence, not from covetousness, but to the end that, after providing for his own wants, and for those of his family, he may have something to give to him that needeth.

But perhaps you may ask, What then is the great difference between the Christian, who trusts in God, and the man of the world, who trusts to himself? seeing that both of them have to work for their livelihood, and to work just as hard the one as the other: so that in this respect the Christian does not seem to have any advantage over his ungodly neighbour. True; so far as work goes, the Christian certainly has no advantage. But in other things he has many and great advantages. He is comparatively free from cares. "Cast all your cares upon God (saith St Peter, 1 v. 7); for he careth for you." The Christian does so: and it gives him ease of spirit: while the worldly-minded are always labouring under a heavy load of thought and care. You know how easy it is

for a man to entangle himself in the affairs of this world; and how we are naturally led on to plunge deeper and deeper in them, almost without perceiving it, till we get into the midst of so many troubles and anxieties, that, like travelers who have lost their way in a thick dark wood, we can see nothing but the things close about us, and can hardly catch a glimpse of heaven. But no evil of this sort can befall a man who refers all his plans to God. The habit of doing so is quite enough to save him from such a danger. For while a man consecrates all his plans to God, and gives him the first place in all his schemes, and tries to keep him ever before his eyes, how is it likely that he should ever lose sight of him? Even if, in looking after his business, he does lose sight of God for a moment, he straightway perceives his loss. He misses the light and comfort of God's presence, just as an Indian would miss the cheering warmth of the sun in one of our dark November fogs. This leads him to trace his steps back again, out of the thick wood of business, into the free sunshine of God's presence. Instead of giving up his God for his business, he narrows his business, that it may not withdraw him from his God.

In this too he takes a lesson from the Lord's Prayer. For inasmuch as the danger of forgetting

God under the stress of worldly business, if we plunge into it blindfold, is very great, and the punishment denounced against us, if we do forget God, is very terrible and certain, our Saviour, beside this general security arising from the habit of referring all things to God, has furnished us in the text with another security, by teaching us what we are to pray, and accordingly what we are to wish for. We are not to pray for a great heap of riches, for a great mountain of prosperity, to be thrown upon us all at once; for perchance the mountain might bury us under its weight: but we are to pray merely for our daily bread. Not only are we to bear in mind that we are wholly dependent upon God: we must not even wish it to be otherwise. We should be content to be fed by his ordinary providence, just as Elijah was fed by the ravens, that brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; or just as the children of Israel were fed in the wilderness by the manna, which was given them from day to day. Such is the spirit which Christ would foster in us, a spirit of such complete trust, of such heavenly freedom from all anxiety, that, as long as God supplies our present wants, we are to rely on him for all beyond, and not to trouble him with so much as a prayer about the future, so far as concerns this world's goods. When

we pray for heavenly blessings, for the coming of God's kingdom, for the doing of God's will, we are to pray without stint or limit: when we pray for the goods of this world, we are to ask for our daily bread. Were Christians really and truly animated by a spirit of this kind, it would be just as impossible for them to lose themselves in the cares of this world, as for a traveler to lose himself under a single tree. In a wood of trees he may lose himself; and so may the Christian lose himself in a wood of business: therefore Christ, to save us from this danger, warns us in his prayer to keep out of the wood, and to be content with the shelter of the single tree.

Observe too, what it is we are to pray for. Not for delicate food, or fine clothes, or a large house: no, we are to ask for bread. Now what are we to understand by this word, *bread?* Surely not a crust of bread alone. For this plain reason,—that there are other things as needful for our bodies as bread itself. What should we do without clothes to cover us, or a roof to put our heads under at night? We may be sure that our Saviour did not mean us to disregard such things as these. Therefore, when he tells us to pray for bread, we may reasonably understand that petition as including all things which are really needful for our bodies. Accordingly St Paul in his Epistle

to Timothy writes as follows: "Having food and raiment let us be content. But they that will be rich, (they that are greedy of riches, and strive to get rich,) fall into temptation and a snare. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Mark the apostle's words: people who are anxious to grow rich pierce themselves through with many sorrows. Our Lord, you may remember, compares the cares of this world to thorns. Like thorns, they pierce and wound and tear the hearts of those who lay up their treasure on earth. Would you escape these wounds? Shun the thorns. Keep yourself free and far off from worldly cares. Lay up your treasures, lay up your hearts in heaven. According to the letter of the apostle's precept, according to the spirit of the text, having received your daily bread from God, having received food and raiment from him, and such other things as are necessary for the life and health of the body, therewith be content.

Now how many are there in every country who have received far more from God than this! How many by his gracious gifts are not only enjoying the necessaries of life, but a number of comforts and conveniences! Nay, there is hardly a poor person in these parts of England who does not get

what our great grandfathers would have deemed to be luxuries. I will mention two of these,—tea and wheaten bread. If any one a hundred years ago had foretold that the time would come, when every cottage in England would have its teapot and its loaf of wheaten bread, he would have been laughed at as a foolish dreamer. Yet that time is come. Whether the people of England have bettered their condition by eating wheaten bread and drinking tea, instead of eating barley bread and drinking beer, as your great grandfathers are said to have done, is another question. I only mention the change, to shew you that even the poorest folks in the land nowadays enjoy what our forefathers used to look upon as luxuries. Nay, the bread which our Saviour himself ate, the bread which he taught his disciples to pray for, was not made of wheat, but rye.

Without saying more however on this point, thus much is plain,—that very many persons in the land have received the good things of this life from the hands of their heavenly Father in plentiful abundance. What then ought they, or what ought we,—for I too am one of those who are thus bountifully provided for,—what ought we to do? If we did as we ought, we should never repeat the Lord's Prayer, without a feeling of thankfulness for having received so much more than our daily

bread : and a blush of shame ought to come over us at the sound of the word bread, when we remember all that God has given to us, and the little gratitude we have shewn to him in return. Moreover we should not allow our abundance to swell and lift up our souls, and make us highminded, but should ever fear, remembering that the hand which has given us everything, can also take everything away. We too, more than all others, should feel ourselves bound to take no thought for the morrow. Seeing that God has already provided thus richly for us, we should trust wholly in that bounty, of which we have already had such experience. Above all should we beware lest we let our souls be weighed down to the earth by the blessings vouchsafed to us. To that end we should ever bear in mind that they are not our own, but God's, that our riches is merely a loan with which we have been entrusted for the good of our brethren, and that, if we turn it away from its real purpose, to the pampering of our own appetites, we shall have a fearful account to render of the manner in which we have mispent our stewardship.

But I said above, that God not only gives the rich man his riches; he also gives the poor man the means whereby he earns his bread. If any of you are skilled in any craft, it is God who gave

you your skill. If any of you are strong to labour, God gave you your strength. But he has not given it to you in fee: you have no lasting right to it: you have not even a lease from year to year, nor from month to month, nor so much as from week to week: he only gives it to you from day to day: and there is no day, there is no minute of any day, when he may not take it away from you, if he pleases. If you live by the sight of your eyes, he may throw a curtain of darkness over your eyes. If you live by the work of your hands and legs, a stroke of palsy may take away the use of them, and turn you into a helpless cripple. All of you then have reason to be lowly-minded, to beware of priding yourselves, whether on your cleverness, or on your strength, or on your health. All of you should ever bear in mind, that what God has graciously given you for the purpose of supporting yourselves and your families, must not be wasted in idleness and sloth, or in rioting and drunkenness: you should bear in mind, that you too will have to give account for the use of the talents which have been entrusted to you. Every day God gives you his gift anew. Every day then ought you to make him some return for that gift. Every day ought you to lay up something or other in that heavenly treasury, where God, for the sake of his blessed Son, allows

you to lay up treasures which pass not away with the day, but will outlast the earth itself. Every day too ought you to bless God for the new gift he has vouchsafed to bestow on you: and when he thinks fit to take it away, you should remember that what he takes away is not yours, but his: so that you can have no plea to murmur or repine, seeing it is only of God's great bounty that he has let you keep it so long. Thus everything we have, whether it be riches, or skill, or strength, or health, becomes precious, because it is the gift of God, a gift too which God has given us to be employed in his service, in laying up treasures in heaven. Therefore it must not be abused, by being turned to unholy purposes, to the feeding of our carnal appetites, or to the laying up of treasures in hell. If your father gave you a very precious gift, you would not go and fling it before swine: yet, though every gift of God is more precious than any pearls, too many rush with theirs to the alehouse or the ginshop, or some other of the devil's styes, and make all haste to throw it to the swine to trample under foot. Be not so unwise, brethren: throw not your pearls before swine: throw not those precious pearls, your health and your strength,—throw not your money, which, if you have more than you need, you may employ in the blessed work of

relieving the wants of your brethren,—throw not pearls of such price before any of those foul swine, —gluttony, and drunkenness, and the other lusts of the flesh.

Such is the meaning of the petition for our daily bread, which we are taught to offer up in the Lord's Prayer; and such are the lessons it ought to teach us. The use of that prayer, I need hardly remark, is not to hinder us from using other prayers. As we are taught in Scripture in everything to make our desires known to God, there can be no doubt that we may innocently pray for many worldly goods, beside our daily bread. The farmer for instance may and ought to pray for God's blessing on his crops, that the land may yield him its increase. So too the merchant may and ought to pray to God to bless his merchandize; and the tradesman should pray to him to bless his trade. In short, every one of us, be our station and business what it may, is warranted by Scripture to recommend his plans and wishes to the care and protection of his heavenly Father. Only every petition of this kind must be offered up in the spirit of the Lord's Prayer, that is, with great thankfulness to Almighty God for having hitherto given us so much more than our daily bread, with great trust in his mercy, that he will continue to give us what he knows to be best for us, and with

perfect resignation to his will, in the assurance that, when he does not grant our petition, it is only for one of two reasons, either because we have asked amiss, or because the thing we asked for would on the whole have done us harm, instead of good. He who prays for any earthly blessing in such a temper as this, prays for it in the spirit of the Lord's Prayer; and his prayer will be blest to him, whether God grants it, or refuses it. Remember then that we are authorized and encouraged, and commanded too, in Scripture to make our wants known to God. But one man's wants are not another man's wants: therefore each of us must present his own wants to God in his own private prayers. Christ in his prayer has only mentioned the one bodily want which all mankind have in common, bread, or food. In very hot countries the inhabitants need little clothing: in dry and warm climates the people can live and sleep in the open air a great part of the year without hurt. Nay, our Lord himself had not where to lay his head. In no country does a person need new clothes or a new house every day in the year. Jesus Christ therefore, in this his prayer, which he meant for the daily use of people of all climates and countries, says nothing about clothes or houses. But there is one thing which

everybody in every country has need of every day; and for this one thing we are taught to ask.

On the whole then, calling to mind how often in Scripture our christian life is compared to a journey and to a warfare, we shall not do ill in likening ourselves to soldiers on active service, who must not think of houses, but must be satisfied to sleep in tents, or even under the naked sky, when occasion calls for it; and who, when they have got their clothes, must take care of them, and not think of new ones, till those they have are worn out. But their daily rations, their daily food, they may expect and ask for; because without it they would be unable to bear up against the toils of war, and would faint and fall by the way. Thus we too, the soldiers of Jesus Christ, may humbly ask our heavenly Father and our Commander to give us each our daily bread; because without it our strength would droop, and our life would wither away, before we had finished the task which our God and Saviour has given us to do. Therefore, in praying for our daily bread, we are in fact praying for life, and for such a portion of the necessaries of life, as may support us through another day of the dangerous march toward the

city of our Captain in heaven: we are praying that we may have all that is needful for us, in order that we may fight our way thither, until we are allowed to join our Lord, and to be with him for ever.

SERMON XVI.

LORD'S PRAYER;

SIXTH PART.

FORGIVENESS.

LUKE xi. 4.

And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.

I ENDED my last sermon by reminding you of the comparisons so common in the Bible, in which our life is likened to a journey and to a warfare; and I told you, that, in praying to God for our daily bread, we are in fact praying to him for what is needful in order that we may have strength to reach the end of our journey, and to fight our way through all the hindrances that beset us, to the city of our Lord and Saviour. But suppose a

man to be a wayfarer, whether a soldier or a traveler, what is the thing which above all others would encumber and fatigue him on his march? Assuredly a heavy weight, a great pack or load to carry, would be more against a man in a long journey than anything else one could mention. Many of you can lift a sack of wheat, and can carry it some little way. But think of being condemned to walk from here to Devizes, or rather from here to Bath, with a sack of wheat on your shoulder every day for a month together. How soon would the stoutest man among you break down under such a load! He might contrive to stagger on a little way: but his strength before long would fail him; and if he did not drop his load, it would crush him. Now sin,—when a man is in his right senses, when he knows whither he ought to be going,—is a weight on the soul, and presses it down, just as a weight on the back presses down the body. Many of you must have read or heard of poor Christian in the Pilgrim's Progress, how, after he had read a while in a book given him by one, Evangelist, that is, after he had studied the word of God, he felt a burthen on his back so heavy that it almost bowed him to the earth. That burthen is an allegory to express the painful weight of sin, which is indeed a burthen to the awakened conscience, yea, a sore burthen too

heavy for it to bear. When thus overweighted with the sense of guilt, how can the christian warrior march forward? Nay, under such a load, how can he act the soldier in the field? A man who fights, needs to be nimble and strong, and should have all his limbs free and unshackled. He must not go into battle tottering under a load: else a slight thrust will push him over, a slip will lay him on the ground.

Therefore our Lord, after teaching us to ask for food, to support us through the toil of our daily christian march, and to carry us through the hardships of our daily christian warfare, bad us ask for the pardon of our sins; because, unless we are pardoned, we can neither fight nor march to good purpose. This is the second petition in that part of the Lord's prayer which we are now considering, the second petition which our Lord commands us to offer up for ourselves: "Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us."

While a sense of guilt is lying heavy on a man, I said, he cannot, at least he will not, serve God to good purpose. He will not move forward on the road to heaven: he will not stand his ground against temptation. The children of this world indeed tell a different story. According to them the forgiveness of sins so freely offered to sin-

ners in the New Testament only encourages men to sin on. And so it may some. There may be, and I fear there are, persons so wretched and so foolish, as to abuse the blessed doctrine of forgiveness through the blood of Christ, to the dishonour of God, and their own ruin. There may be, and I fear there are, persons who think to take advantage of God's mercy, and put off repenting year after year, saying to themselves, "We shall have time to repent by and by." Thus they go on, until God's judgement falls on them, and death overtakes them with all their sins unrepented of, and gives them over to judgement and to hell. What spirit can such persons be possest by! Do they fancy that they can cheat God? Cannot they hear the voice of Scripture, which plainly declares that man cannot repent at will? Does not the Bible say plainly to men of this stamp,—"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jerem. xiii. 23). Does not our own experience too shew the truth of this? Is it not the rarest of all things, to see a man, who has spent his life in sin and in forgetfulness of God, turn to God in good earnest in his old age? You must have known many old people, some, I hope, religious, and some, I am afraid, irreligious. Now of those who really and truly died in the fear

and love of God, after spending their latter days in his service, how many were converted and began to turn to God after they became old? Do you know three such? If you do, you know a great number. But I feel almost certain you can none of you recollect so much as three old persons, who died a godly death, after having lived ungodly till they grew old. If this be so, is it not a folly and a madness deserving stripes,—alas! what has a christian minister to do with stripes!—let me rather say, deserving our pity and our prayers,—is it not a sad, pitiable folly, brethren, for a man to stake his soul on this desperate chance of a late repentance, after a life of sin and ungodliness?

But, though the doctrine of free forgiveness to all who sue to God for mercy through the blood of Christ may be thus perverted and abused, it is still a blessed and a holy doctrine, and is well fitted to make men holy. Were men no better than beasts or devils, it might encourage them to sin. But considering what the true nature of man is,—that he has a conscience to be aroused, and feelings to be touched, and affections to be won,—this doctrine of forgiveness ought to lead him, and does lead many, to God. Nothing can be more certain than that sin cuts man off from God, and raises a bar which keeps him away. The Scripture compares it to a chain, which binds a man

and holds him prisoner. Would you set the man free? You must break the chain: and that can only be done by forgiveness. If you ask me how sin is a chain, I answer, it is like a chain, because it hangs about a man, and clogs him, and hinders him from seeking God. None of us like to go to a person, to whom we know we have given just cause of offense. The sight of such a person is irksome to us: we feel awkward and ill at ease in his company: we stay away from him as much as we can: if we are forced to go to him, we feel it a relief to get away again. So it is between man and man: so too is it between man and God. While we believe God to be offended with us, while our consciences tell us that we are at variance with him, we cannot be at ease in his presence. We dare not think of him: we dare not pray to him: we get away from him as far as we can. This is no new effect of sin: it has been so from the beginning. After Adam and Eve had committed the first sin, by eating the forbidden fruit, we read, that they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden. Now mark what follows: "And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called to Adam, and said to him, Where art thou? And Adam said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid,

because I was naked; and I hid myself." Naked he was indeed with the worst of nakedness: his soul was naked: it was lying bare and open with the black stain of sin upon it; and Adam felt that it was so. This was the nakedness he was afraid of. He could not bear to feel the eye of God looking on that black spot; so he went and hid himself. And do not sinners in the present day just the same? Do they not try to hide themselves from God in business, in pleasure, in revelings, in idle company? Do they not try all means in their power to fly from their own thoughts, and from their own conscience? Do they not hate and dread serious self-examination above all things? because they know that in such moments God causes his presence to be felt; and they are afraid to feel that God is looking on them. They cannot bear to tear the rag off from their festering sins: they cannot bear the torture of probing their hearts: they cannot abide the shame of seeing and knowing how bad their condition is. So they turn away from all serious thoughts of God in private, and from all serious talk about him with their neighbours. They shun all self-examination, and shut their eyes to their danger, with the desperate cowardice of a ruined man, who will not face a creditor, nor look into a bill, nor cast up an account-book. How must this end? How

does it always end with those who dare not face their earthly creditors? Common sense and experience tell us: sooner or later in utter ruin. How then must such a course end with those who have God Almighty for their creditor? Reason and conscience unite to tell us: sooner or later in utter ruin. The man who will not look into the state of his affairs in this world, must be ruined in this world: the man who will not look into the state of his soul, must be ruined for ever.

Here are two sad truths plainly made out, that the consciousness of being sinners keeps men away from God, and that, in keeping away from God, we keep away from happiness: in turning from him, we rush into ruin. How was this evil to be remedied? Looking at it with the eyes of a man, one should have said, there was no way. For the more men became sinners, the more need they had of God: yet the more they became sinners, the more afraid they were of coming to him. But God seeth not as man seeth: in the depths of his merciful wisdom he discovered a remedy for the evil. That remedy in one word is forgiveness. He has come to us in the person of his Son, and has called to us in the midst of our sinful courses, saying, "Why will ye die? I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. Only turn to me, and ye shall live." Return to the Lord, and he

will have mercy upon you; return to our God, for he will abundantly pardon you. This is the plan which our Father has devised for melting the stubborn naughtiness of men's hearts. He has begun with offering them forgiveness. It is easy to see how that one offer wholly changes the state of the question. A God who offers us forgiveness is no longer a terrible God, whom we need be afraid to look upon. He comes to us in a character of mercy, bringing hopeful gifts. Nay, he comes to us in a human form, like one of ourselves, that we may be less frightened at him, and readier to listen to him. Above all, he comes to us as a suffering man, to move our pity, as a man suffering undeservedly for our sakes, to awaken our gratitude and love; that so all the gates of our hearts may be thrown open to him, and that he may enter and take possession of them the more easily.

Was I wrong then in saying that the offer of free forgiveness through Christ ought to lead sinners to God? So it does lead those who have sense enough to feel that they are sinners. He who is labouring and fainting under the burthen of his sins will creep to the cross of Christ to be rid of his burthen. But he who does not feel the lump of sin to be a deformity and a disgrace to him, he who does not desire to run the race set before him, and therefore does not feel the weight of those

offenses, which make him crawl, instead of running,—these men of course will not be anxious to be freed from a burthen which they do not feel: they will not be anxious for God's forgiveness; because they are not aware that they need it. The first lesson for us all to learn then is the evil and wickedness of sin. We must get a sense of our own unworthiness and guiltiness in the sight of God. Now this can only be done by a diligent study of the Bible, especially of the New Testament. Everything in the world about us is fitted to stupefy us, and to blind us to the true nature of sin. In the world it wears a mask and a disguise. But in God's book it appears without a mask: we may see it there in all its hideousness. It is spoken of there, as they speak of it in heaven, and as Christ will speak of it when he casts it into hell. Therefore it is only by a diligent study of the New Testament, and of other godly books, that a man can gain a right sense of his guiltiness in the sight of God. But you must read with both your eyes open, and must listen with both your ears open: and one eye must be turned inward on your own soul: one ear must be opened inward to the whispers of your conscience. When you meet with any of those awful threats, which are scattered through Scripture against every kind of sin, you must not say to yourselves, "That does not

apply to me." Your first thought should be rather, "It does apply to me, and was set there to give me warning."

The effect of sin, we have seen, is to frighten us away from God, to make us hide ourselves from him, as Adam and Eve hid themselves from him, to make us fly away from him, as Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord to Tarshish. Thus has it been more or less with all such as have had to struggle and to squeeze through the narrow gate which separates the ways of death and life. Every one, with the exception of the few who have had the happiness to enter the kingdom of heaven as little children, and to abide therein,—every one who has allowed the burthen of unrepented sin to grow upon him, must have felt at the outset of his christian march how that burthen encumbered him and pressed him down: he must have felt too that, had it not been for the hope of being delivered from his burthen sooner or later, he should never have had the courage to persevere. It is hope, the hope of being forgiven for Christ's sake, the hope, if we turn to God, of being received mercifully, as the prodigal son was received by his forgiving father,—it is this firm hope that bears a man up through the dark and dreary season of repentance. For repentance, true repentance, is oftentimes a dark and stormy season. Were it

not for the unfailing promises of Christ, which, like the rainbow in the clouds, are a sure sign to the sinner that his trials shall have an end, and that the flood of his sorrows and iniquities shall not swell so as to drown his soul,—were it not for those comfortable promises which Jesus Christ in his Gospel makes to all such as will truly turn to him, many a sinner's heart would fail: he would say within himself, "This repentance is too painful for me; I will go back to my former sins." Not that the service of sin is easy and pleasant, least of all to the awakened sinner. On the contrary, no sooner does he return to it, than his bondage galls and frets him. But as a man in a fever tosses and turns about from side to side, seeking rest for his body, and finding none, so would it be with the awakened sinner, were he not supported by hope during the trial and struggle of his change. The terrors of the Lord would frighten him into repentance; and then the weariness of repentance would carry him back to sin. So the poor wretch would be driven backward and forward, never resting, yet never getting on. This is even now the state of many, in spite of God's promises: and it would be the state of all, if Christ had not saved us from it. But his promises and invitations are so clear and gracious, that many a poor soul is encouraged by them to perse-

vere in the work of repentance, painful as it may be: until at length God causes his mercy to shine forth on him, like a sunbeam from a stormy cloud, and speaks peace to his wounded spirit: and so the sinner knows himself to be forgiven, and hastens on his way rejoicing. In a word, as it happened to the paralytic man, so does it happen to us. When Christ had said to him, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; arise and walk," he arose, and took up his bed, and went to his home. Thus we too are naturally palsied and lame and halt with sin: but when Jesus says to us, "Repent, and your sins shall be forgiven," we too are strengthened and encouraged to arise and walk in the paths of righteousness. We leave our burthen of sin behind us, and take up our bed, and carry it along with us: that is, in our duty we find our rest.

Let none of you say within himself, "This is all very well for gross and open sinners: but it does not apply to decent, well-behaved persons, such as I am." Remember that a man may sleep upon his burthen, instead of carrying it; and then to be sure he does not feel it. Yes, he may so sleep, and may even dream that he is moving onward: but he who moves only in a dream, will not make much way. Besides his dream must come to an end: he must awake at last. Does not St John tells us, that "if a man says he has no

sin, he deceives himself, and the truth is not in him?" Does not St James say, "In many things we all offend?" Surely these texts are plain enough. He who has never felt the burthen of his sins, and his need of pardon, will do well to ponder and consider them. Want of feeling is no proof of life and health, but the contrary. If one of my hands were benumbed, and had lost all feeling, I should know something ailed it. Were I speaking of it to a neighbour, I should probably say, "My hand is just as if it were dead." Now this is the very way the Bible speaks of those whose souls are not awake to the evil of their nature: it says of them, that they are "*dead* in trespasses and sins." Be not deceived in this matter. Do not mistake a palsied conscience for a healthy one, a dead soul for a live one: do not fancy that, because you feel nothing, you have therefore no burthen on your backs. Rather let your fears be aroused by this very thing, that you do feel nothing. It is a symptom quite dangerous enough to call for all your watchfulness. Set the looking-glass of Scripture right before you, and look yourselves well over therein. To that scriptural self-examination join diligent and hearty prayer. Pray to God to deliver you from the fumes of self-conceit, which prevent your seeing yourselves clearly. Pray to him to shew you your sins. You

will find an excellent prayer for that purpose in the last verses of the 139th Psalm, which you may use with a very slight alteration: "Search me, O God, that I may know my heart: try me, that I may know my thoughts. Shew me if there be any way of wickedness in me: and lead me in the way everlasting." Thus would I have you endeavour to quicken your consciences, that your sense of your misdeeds may carry you with double eagerness to your Saviour,—and that, feeling all the weight and burthen of your sins, you may long the more to be freed from it, and may thus perceive how gracious the Lord is, in commanding us, when we pray, to say, Forgive us our sins: because unless we had the hope of obtaining forgiveness, we could never draw nigh to God.

But it is not simple forgiveness, that our Lord has here taught us to ask for. He has been pleased to join a condition to this prayer; so that, every time we repeat the prayer for forgiveness, we are to repeat the condition also. We are not to say, "Forgive us our sins," without adding, "For we too forgive every one that is indebted to us." These are the words as they stand in St Luke: you are all aware that they are not exactly the same as those you are in the habit of using. You have been taught to say, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

In the text we read, "Forgive us our sins; for we too forgive every one that is indebted to us:" while in St Matthew it stands thus, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." These little differences may serve to shew you how unimportant the words are in comparison with the meaning and the spirit. Whether we say trespasses, or whether we say sins, or whether we say debts, the meaning is just the same: and the meaning is what really signifies. Perhaps it was to keep us in mind of this, and to prevent our making an idol of the words of his prayer, and using them as a spell or charm, without giving heed to their meaning,—that our Saviour varied those words, and said, "Forgive us our debts," when he taught the people in his Sermon on the Mount, and "Forgive us our sins," when he taught them the second time in St Luke. Our prayer, as it stands in the Prayerbook, is probably taken from the old version of the Lord's prayer, used in early ages in this country.

Now surely if any rule, if any motive could keep us all in peace and love with each other, it would be that in our daily prayers we are to declare to God, that we have forgiven every one who has offended us, and that we only ask for mercy ourselves, in proportion as we shew mercy to others: Forgive us, as we forgive them. Shall

we dare then to come before the God of truth, the God who knoweth all things, who sees into our hearts, and reads our very thoughts,—shall we dare come before such a God with a falsehood in our mouths? Shall we lie to God in our prayers? Who can be bold enough to do this? Yet, unless we do it, we must either give over asking for pardon, and must depart altogether from God, and be content to remain under his wrath, or we must ourselves clean forgive every one who has offended us. Conceive a revengeful, unforgiving man repeating this prayer, which you all, I hope, repeat daily,—conceive a man with a heart full of wrath against his neighbour, with a memory which treasures up the little wrongs and insults and provocations he fancies himself to have received from that neighbour,—conceive such a man praying to God most High, to forgive him his trespasses, as he forgives the man who has trespast against him. What in the mouth of such a man do these words mean? They mean . . . but that you may more fully understand their meaning, I will turn them into a prayer, which we will call the prayer of the unforgiving man: "O God, I have sinned against thee many times, from my youth up until now. I have often been forgetful of thy goodness: I have not duly thanked thee for thy mercies: I have neglected thy service: I have broken thy

laws: I have done many things utterly wrong against thee. All this I know: and beside this doubtless I have committed many secret sins, which in my blindness I have failed to notice. Such is my guiltiness, O Lord, in thy sight: deal with me, I beseech thee, even as I deal with my neighbour. He has not offended me one-tenth, one-hundredth part as much as I have offended thee: but he has offended me very grievously; and I cannot forgive him. Deal with me, I beseech thee, O Lord, as I deal with him. He has been very ungrateful to me,—though not a tenth, not a hundredth part as ungrateful as I have been to thee: yet I cannot overlook such base and shameful ingratitude. Deal with me, I beseech thee, O Lord, as I deal with him. I remember and treasure up every little trifle, which shews how ill he has behaved to me. Deal with me, I beseech thee, O Lord, as I deal with him. I am determined to take the very first opportunity of doing him an ill turn. Deal with me, I beseech thee, O Lord, as I deal with him." Can anything be more shocking and horrible than such a prayer? Is not the very sound of it enough to make one's blood run cold? Yet this is just the prayer which the unforgiving man offers up every time he repeats the Lord's prayer. For he prays to God to forgive him in the same

manner in which he forgives his neighbour. But he does not forgive his neighbour: so he prays to God not to forgive him. God grant that his prayer may not be heard! For he is praying a curse on his own head.

Such is the wisdom of the way, such the strength of the motive, by which our Lord has endeavoured to establish peace and goodwill among his people. He has taught us that we cannot be forgiven unless we on our part forgive all our brethren. Thus he has bound heavenly peace and earthly peace together by the golden chain of prayer. We cannot have, we are not even to ask for heavenly peace, for peace with God, unless our hearts bear us witness that we have done our utmost to keep at peace with every man, yea, even with those who have ill used us, with those who have spoken evil of us, with those who have borne themselves proudly toward us, or have affronted and insulted us, or have done us any sort of wrong.

Perhaps however you will ask me, what is meant by this forgiveness? how are we to forgive our brethren? The answer is plain enough: even as we wish to be forgiven by God. The same kind of forgiveness, the same degree of forgiveness, which you desire of God, are you to shew to each other. What that is, let your own hearts

tell you, your fears of hell, into which God might justly cast you for your sins, your hopes of heaven, which God for his Son's sake will throw open to the penitent and forgiving: let these tell you how you ought to forgive your neighbour. Or shall I rather send you to the old saying, which contains as much mercy and as much wisdom as was ever put by man into three words? the saying, Forgive and forget. Forgiving and forgetting is the pardon which we desire from God: therefore forgiving and forgetting is the pardon which we are to grant to man.

But some will perhaps say,—at least many have said,—I have heard it said many times,—"Well, I will forgive; but I cannot forget." What! is our memory then better than God's? For he can forget, and has promised to forget, the sins of his people. Thus he saith by the prophet Jeremiah (xxxi. 34): "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Shall God say this of our sins, which are so great that they rise up over our heads? and shall not we be able to say as much of the petty offenses of our neighbour? petty, not in themselves, it may be, yet trifling, insignificant, small as a little mote, when compared with our great beams and mountains of sin against God. But what does God mean, when he says,

he " will remember our sins no more?" He means, that he will never think of them, and never mention them again. Cannot we do as much? Cannot we, in looking at our neighbour's behaviour toward us, look at the better part of it, rather than the worse? Cannot we let our thoughts dwell on those points which make for him, or at least which tend to excuse him, while we turn away from those parts of his conduct which render his fault uglier and more glaring? Cannot we take account of all those matters in our behaviour to him, which may have seemed to him in any degree harsh, or unkind, or angry, or disrespectful, or overbearing? It is not necessary that we should have meant them to be so. You know how easily mistakes arise, how easily the same thing may be construed in two different ways. Cannot we take account of the ill-judged advice of those false friends, who so often fan the flame of discord, instead of throwing water on it and extinguishing it? If we made due allowance for all these things, our neighbour's offenses would dwindle very much in our eyes: and all these allowances we ought in mere justice and fairness to make, whenever we think about his conduct. But the best way is not to think of it at all, still less to speak of it: for, if we refrain from speaking of it, the remembrance will soon die away from our minds. It is

by angry words, that people are wont to swell the fire of their anger, and to make it burn more fiercely. Take away the fuel, and in time it will go out.

This, my brethren, is the forgiveness that we must shew to others. We must not only forgive their offenses against us, but we must forget them. We must never speak of them: we must try never to think of them: we must look about for what may be said in excuse of them. Not only must we abstain from rewarding others evil for evil, from shewing them any unkindness: we may be just as ready to shew them every kindness in our power, as if they had never offended us. We must try to overcome them by kindness, to melt their hearts by pouring benefits upon them. For this is the forgiveness which we crave from God. We not only desire that God should forgive us, not only that he should blot out our offenses, but also that, for the sake of his blessed Son, he should receive us into favour, and give us the good things of heaven.

SERMON XVII.

LORD'S PRAYER.

SEVENTH PART.

TEMPTATIONS, AND EVILS.

LUKE xi. 4.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

OF the petitions contained in the third part of the Lord's prayer,—the petitions we offer up for ourselves,—we have already considered two; in which we utter our wishes to God with regard to the present and the past. For the present; we pray God to give us our daily bread, which means, as our Catechism teaches us, all such things as are strictly needful both for our souls and bodies. As to the past, we have besought him to forgive us our trespasses, and to deliver us from the weight and burthen of our sins. Having thus provided for the

present and the past, it only remains for us to entreat our heavenly Father to take care of us and help us through the future. This our Saviour teaches us to do in the last two petitions of his prayer: "Lead us not into temptation: but deliver us from evil." These petitions, you will easily see, look to the future, the time to come: just as the petition for our daily bread looks to the time now present, and the petition for forgiveness to that which is gone by.

The christian soldier,—to use the comparison already employed more than once in these sermons,—the christian soldier, we will suppose, has received his rations; he has been freed from the heavy load, under which he had groaned and tottered; he has been fed and armed and eased of his burthen by the Spirit and the promises of God; and he is now ready to set out on his day's march toward heaven. But the march lies through an enemy's country, and is beset with dangers, concealed and open. There are traps and snares and pitfalls for the unwary: there are the assaults of our great foe, and all the hindrances of every kind that he can stir up, to scare us back or stop us on our march, or at least to make us slacken our pace and loiter in our progress toward holiness. These assuredly are great dangers; so in order to prepare us for them, that we may not run

into them blindly and rashly, our Lord has taught us to pray daily, not to be led into temptation, and to be delivered from evil. Thus the text divides itself into two parts: first a petition against temptation, by which we may understand the snares and pitfalls placed along our road,—and next a petition against evil, that is, against all those more open dangers to which the christian soldier is exposed Sin is evil, and the only real evil. The devil is evil, and the father of it. Wicked men are evil; for they do it, and forward it, and set an example of it, and entice others to it. From all these, and from all the hurt of every kind which they can do to our souls, and bodies, we pray our heavenly Father to preserve us, when we say, Deliver us from evil.

Our first prayer to God then with regard to the time to come is, that he will not lead us into temptation. That God will not lead us into temptation! What can that mean? Can it mean that God has any pleasure in tempting us, in putting stumbling-blocks and pitfalls across our road to heaven? Not so, my brethren: harbour no such thought against your God. He has expressly taught us by his apostle, St James, that he tempts no man: "but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed." So it is not God that tempts us, but our own lusts,

our own evil passions and desires and propensities: these tempt us, and entice us, and, if we listen to them, draw us into sin. Every man, the apostle tells us, is tempted by his own lust, that is, by his own particular evil bent or propensity. All men have not the same evil bent, the same wrong bias. All are not disposed alike to the same wickedness: but some are more easily tempted by one thing, some by another. Some love their ease: some are eager after business: some are fond of pleasure: some prize money above everything: some care little about money in comparison with power: some again are vain, and wish above all things to be admired, to be thought handsome, or clever, or learned, or wise. Some are hot and passionate; while others are sullen: some are sluggish and fearful: while others are rash and headstrong. In a word, every man, according to his temper and character, is liable to some particular temptation; just as, according to the constitution of our bodies, we are each of us liable to some particular disease. All men, you know, are not of the same habit of body. Some are consumptive, and liable to disorders of the lungs. Others are of a full habit, and have most to fear from fevers. In the same way our souls are not all equally prone to fall into the same sin: but every one, as St James tells us, has his

own lust, his own failing, his own weak point, which puts him in especial danger.

Perhaps you would like an example or two, to explain this and shew the truth of it. There are plenty of such in the Bible. Solomon, in spite of all his wisdom, was drawn away by his love of women: that was his temptation; and it is one by which millions and millions have fallen. Righteous Lot was betrayed into shameful crimes by the love of strong drink: that was his temptation; and you all know how many are beset by it, and how easily those who give way to it roll from one sin to another. Balaam again, all prophet as he was, was ruined by the love of money: that was his temptation; and by the very same Satan is every day catching thousands of souls. Here we have three men, highly and wonderfully gifted, who in other respects had great excellencies, each drawn away by his own lust. So that, since every man has such a root of evil in him, you may easily understand how much to be wished it is that we should not be placed in situations where that root would be encouraged to come up, and gather strength, and grow into a stem and branches of iniquity. It would be a great misfortune, you know, to a man with weak lungs, to call him to live in a cold, bleak air. So would it to a man with weak eyes, to fix him in a situation which

required much study by candle-light. Now it is to the full as dangerous for the soul of the ambitious man, to be put into the road which leads to high stations, as it can be for the lungs of the consumptive man, to give him a house on a bleak hill. So is it just as dangerous for the soul of a man like Balaam, to have much to do with money-bags, as it could be for the sight of the weak-eyed man to spend his nights in hard study.

What great reason then have we all to pray earnestly to God, for ourselves, and for our friends and relations, that he would not place either them or us in situations to call forth our evil propensities, and rouse them to mischievous action! At present, it may be, they are asleep within us; because God has placed us in a humble station, where the soil is ill-suited to the evil root; so that it lies almost dead, and only shews itself in our wishes, in our fancies, and in our dreams. But were he to transplant us hence to some other soil more kindly to that root of evil, what a change for the worse might ensue. Our evil passion might take fire; the evil root might sprout up: the lust, which has hitherto been kept down and been barren, might conceive, and bring forth sin and death. All this might happen to any of us: and it would happen, I am convinced, to many, if God did not keep them out of harm's

way. One often hears people saying, "How I wish I were this!—I wish I were that.—I should make such a figure, I should go on so fast, in such a line of life." One often hears people talking in this way both of themselves and others. My belief however is, that God knows how to choose our places for us better than we do. Whenever we see a strong desire of this sort thwarted, whenever we find a person, not mad with conceit, thinking himself fitted to fill a higher station in life, yet set in a lower, we may well suppose that God has some good reason for this. Perhaps that very thirst after fame, after rank, after riches or honours, which is now stunted by God's providence to a mere wish, may betoken a feverish and disordered state of soul, which, if it came to be pampered by opportunity, instead of being kept low and curbed, would get ahead and gain a mastery over the man, and hurl him into everlasting ruin. For as lust brings forth sin, so does sin, when wrought into act and deed, bring forth death.

This then is one thing that our Lord means, by commanding us to pray to God not to lead us into temptation. We are to pray that he will not place us in situations favorable to our bad passions, and unfavorable to our good principles. Thus much we may humbly hope that God will

mercifully grant us. But though this is a very important part of this petition, it is only a part. The petition not to be led into temptation embraces a great deal more than this. For beside that root of evil, which I have been speaking of, and which we will call the taproot, every man has sundry lesser shoots of the same family. Such are the many infirmities of the temper, haste, heat, coldness, carelessness, indolence; to say nothing of all the frailties belonging to the flesh. Now these are faults which pertain to man as man; they need no particular situation to ripen them, but will spring up almost everywhere. Whether we are lords or peasants, whether masters or servants, whether learned or ignorant, whether townsfolk or countryfolk, we must have tempers, we must have bodily appetites: and those tempers and appetites will expose us to trial more or less. Greatly then does it behove us to pray daily not to be led into temptation, seeing that our daily walk in life is hedged with so many dangers. We may fall in divers ways by our tempers: we may fall in divers ways by our bodies. We may fall by prosperity, which hardens and puffs up: we may fall by adversity, which sours, and breeds discontent and envy. In praying therefore against temptation, we ask God to preserve us from all these downfalls; or rather we ask him not to place

us in circumstances, where our particular infirmities would be tried. For instance, in the mouth of a hot-tempered man, it would be a petition against everything that might stir his anger. In the mouth of a timid person, it would be a petition against anything that might frighten him out of the right path. In the mouth of the obstinate, it would be a petition against whatever might foster their stubbornness; and so on.

We must not flatter ourselves however that this part of the petition will be granted in its full extent. We must not flatter ourselves that God will enable us to go through life without being exposed to any sort of temptation. For this world is a place of trial and discipline. Now without some kind of temptation we should have no trials, and no opportunity of exercising several of the christian graces. It is only in war and in battle, that the soldier,—and the Christian, remember, is God's soldier,—can learn his duty thoroughly. He may learn to handle his arms in peace: but the coolness, the quickness, the watchfulness, the caution, the steady unbending courage, which distinguish the veteran from the recruit, are only to be gained on actual service. So it is only by actual service against God's enemies, it is only by passing through temptations and trials, that the Christian can be trained to his work. He needs to be taught the

lesson of his own weakness. He needs to be taught to watch and guard against the surprises and stratagems of the foe. He needs to be perfected in faith and patience. How is all this to be done, if he is kept, like a plant under a glass, from every breath and touch of temptation? No: we shall assuredly be led into temptation, whether we pray against it or not; because there is no earthly road to heaven but has its own pitfalls, and its own snares. This is a sad but certain truth: and I should only deceive you were I to tell you otherwise.

If this however be so, if all must needs be tempted, what is the good, you may ask, of praying not to be led into temptation? The good is great and plain. For though God will not keep us away from all temptations, he will so order the matter, if we pray to him and trust in him, that the temptations shall lose half their danger. He will preserve us from being surprised by them: he will proportion them to our strength: he will enable us to withstand them. "In vain (says the wise man, Prov. i. 17) is the net spread in the sight of any bird." Thus in vain will the snares of hell be set for us, if God opens our eyes to see them, and gives us wisdom to shun them. It is in this manner, if I mistake not, that God will answer our prayer to him, not to lead us into temptation.

He will not take temptations altogether out of our way: but he will shew us how to escape them. He may perhaps now and then even lead us into temptations: but he will not leave us in the midst of them. He will be with us to guide us through the peril. He will carry us safe through the fire, and through the water, without suffering the fire to scorch us, or the water to come over our souls.

Here a consideration occurs which must never be overlooked,—namely, that temptations derive all their power of hurting us from our own weakness. If we were not so frail and blind, they would be no temptations to us. As the Psalmist says (lxxvii. 10), it is our own infirmity. Therefore, when God strengthens our infirmities, he does the same thing as weakening our temptations. If you had a weight to lift, which was a little above your strength, so long as the weight remained the same, and your strength too remained the same, you would be unable to lift it. But if half the weight were taken away, you could lift it then: so could you, if your strength were doubled. It is the same with all temptations. They are dangerous in proportion as they are too much for us. Therefore God is sometimes pleased to lessen the temptations: at other times, by a still greater mercy, he is pleased to increase our strength to bear them.

Thus, when a thorn in the flesh was given to St Paul, we read (2 Cor. xii. 8) that he "besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him." Now observe how this prayer was answered. His petition was not granted. But "the Lord said, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Observe too why the thorn was sent. St Paul tells us: "to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure." Such is God's way of dealing with his servants. He takes the sting out of the temptation, and tempers down its poison, till he turns it into a medicine for their infirmities. It is thus that the various temptations into which, or rather through which, God leads his people,—partly by the watchfulness they oblige us to, partly by the graces they exercise, and partly by the powerful searching medicines which God's good skill knows how to extract from them,—it is thus, I say, that even the temptations and trials of those who truly love and fear God, are so overruled and ordered by him, that even they work together for our good.

Moreover our Lord, by commanding us to pray against all temptations, has taught us both humility and caution. He has taught us humility, in commanding us to pray not against some temptations, but against all. Nor does he say, Support us under temptations, but, Lead us not into temp-

tation; as if the very approaching them were perilous. So that every temptation, however small, is dangerous to us, unless we are protected by God's Spirit. Surely this should teach us not to be high-minded, but to fear.

So likewise should it teach us caution, such caution as is enjoined in every part of Holy Writ. We are not to enter into the path of the wicked, but to turn from it and pass away. We are not to look upon the wine, when it sparkles in the cup. We are to flee youthful lusts. The author of the book of Ecclesiasticus tells us (xxi. 2) to "flee from sin as from the face of a serpent; for, if thou comest too near, it will bite thee." In vain do we pray to God not to lead us into temptation, if we run into it of our own accord. Now let me ask you, brethren, are you duly careful in this matter? Are you careful to keep yourselves and your families out of the ways of sin? Are you on your guard against bad company? But what is bad company? Why, every company is bad to you, and every place is bad to you, if it occasions you to sin against God. Temptations, I said just now, draw their strength from our frailty. What may be no temptation to another man, may, from some weakness of character or disposition, be a crafty snare to me. Therefore it becomes me to avoid it. If you had a ditch to cross in the way to your work,

and it was so broad that you could not leap over it, after trying and tumbling in once or twice perhaps, you would go round by the bridge. It would be no reason to you that neighbour such a one could leap it. You would say, "He is welcome to leap it then; but I can only leap into it: I have tried twice already: twice have I wetted myself, and dirtied my clothes: so I will not run the risk again. The safe way over the bridge is good enough for me." In like manner, if by frequenting such a place, or such a company, you find that you have fallen once or twice into sin, listen not to the tempter when he bids you try again. Say within yourself: "I have tried too often already: I will run no further risk of hurting and dirtying my soul. Christ has cleansed it with his blood: it is too precious a thing to be polluted."

I have still to speak to you of the second petition which Christ has commanded us to offer up with regard to the future, the petition that God will deliver us from evil, or rather from the evil one: for so perhaps the word may be more closely translated. This petition is in fact the same which our Lord, on the night he was betrayed, offered up for his apostles; when he prayed to his Father, "not that he would take them out of the world, but that he would keep them from the evil,"—that

is, from the evil one (John xvii. 15). Therefore our Catechism, in explaining this petition, teaches us to understand it as a prayer to God, that he will keep us from all sin and wickedness, and from our ghostly enemy, and from everlasting death. It is from our ghostly enemy, the devil, who is the author of all evil, and from all sin and wickedness, which are his works, and from everlasting death, which is the portion appointed for him and his, that we are to pray to our heavenly Father to deliver us.

Here it is worth while to remark the difference between the notion of evil which the Bible teaches, and the notion of evil which the world teaches. If you ask a man of the world what evil is, he will tell you, everything that gives you pain, or annoys you, or makes you uncomfortable. Bad health, for instance, he will say is an evil; a lazy servant is an evil: a hard master, a quarrelsome neighbour, are evils: so is a damp house: poverty again is an evil: afflictions of all kinds are evils. If he troubled his head about state affairs, he would add such and such things in the government of the country, which he wished to see reformed or done away. In short, evil, according to the worldly man, is whatever troubles the body, or interferes with our worldly prosperity and comfort. But is this the Christian's notion of evil? Is this the

answer which St Paul or St John would have given, if any one had asked them what evil is? They would tell you that the only evil of any consequence is what is against the will of God. So that the devil is above all the Evil One; because he is the great opposer of that goodness, which God wills and delights in. They would tell you further, that, in proportion as anything draws us nearer to God, it is good; in proportion as anything draws us away from God, it is evil. Sin therefore is the greatest evil which a Christian has to fight against, and to dread; because it is the chief hindrance which keeps us from God, the great partition-wall between us and him. Were there no such thing as sin in the world, we should be with God, as Adam was before the Fall. The pure in heart,—they who are free from inward, as well as from outward sin, — our Lord tells us, shall see God. Yes, even in this life they have a spiritual perception of him with the eyes and senses of their souls; the vapours of sin, which conceal him from us, being in their case nearly swept away. The thick cloud which hides God from the sinner, is to them little more than a misty veil, through which they are permitted to catch glimpses of his excellences, and to see him, though only through a glass, and darkly. But the sinner has no such glimpses; for to him the glass is stained and

blackened by the smoke and foulness of his sins. So that sin is doubly an evil. It is an evil, because it spreads a fog over the understanding, and hinders it from seeing God: and it is an evil, because it winds a chain round the heart, and fastens it down to the earth and the things of the earth, and hinders it from rising up to God.

Now which of these notions of evil is the truer? the Christian's, or the worldly man's? They are totally different. The one looks at the annoyances of the body, the other at the clogs of the soul. The one speaks of those things which make us ill at ease here on earth, the other of those things which keep us back from heaven. The man of the world looks to himself, and calls those things evil, which are displeasing to himself: the Christian looks to God, and calls those things evil, which are displeasing to God. Which of these two accounts is the truer? Which is the truer and the wiser way of judging of things? to measure them by reference to God? or to measure them by reference to ourselves? Moreover which have we most reason to be afraid of? a hurt to our bodies? or a hurt to our souls? Which hurt will sink the deepest? which will last the longest? Death, my good friends, the great and fatal hurter, Death, from the graves around us, has a voice to answer these questions. The inmates of those graves

were once as much alive to all the pains and annoyances of the body and of the world, as we can be. They suffered as much in their days from sickness and afflictions of every kind. What are they the worse for it now? What does their dust feel now of all those pains and pinchings, which they deemed so sore and intolerable? No more than any of you feel of the sicknesses you went through when lying in your cradles? Do you remember any of those sicknesses? Can you feel the pain you felt when you were teething? Can you call back the taste of any nauseous medicine which you may have taken when a year old? Then, but not else, may the corpses in the churchyard still feel, still mind the pains they went through when alive. Death ended all those pains. Death, in giving our bodies their last wound, frees them from all pain afterward. But the same death, which closes the pains of the body, opens and begins the sufferings of the soul,—sufferings exceeding bitter, and hopeless, and without end,—sufferings which will make the resurrection of the body a curse, instead of a blessing, to the wicked; since it will only give them new inlets of pain, a body of torture, as well as a soul. Is not this then the true evil? is not this the thing to be really dreaded? this second, this everlasting, everfeeling death. My brethren, in the same degree in which this second

death, the death of the soul, is worse than the first death, the death of the body, in the very same degree must sin, the evil of the soul, be worse than any evil which can befall the body: for sin, it is written, brings forth death. These then, and not the annoyances which the worldly man makes so much of, are the evils which should rise up before our hearts and minds, when we pray to be delivered from evil. These are the evils against which the Church, in the spirit of the Lord's prayer, lifts up her voice, crying to her Saviour and her God, "From sin, from the crafts and assaults of the devil, from thy wrath, and from everlasting condemnation, good Lord deliver us."

But it may be asked, and will be, I dare say, by some, "Is not bodily pain then an evil? and sickness? and poverty? and the loss of friends? are not all these evils?" Yes, undoubtedly, to us they are lesser evils; and, as such, we may pray against them. Our Lord himself prayed thrice that his cup of suffering might pass away from him. In this too we are permitted to follow his example; so long as we bear in mind that at the worst they are only lesser evils, and that in the end it is not unlikely they may prove to have been for our good. If any man ever suffered the sufferings of the body,—and those of the heart too, from false brethren, from ungrateful disciples, from the slan-

ders of his enemies, and the desertion of his friends, —the apostle Paul suffered them. Yet how does he speak of them? "Our light affliction (he says), which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." This is the true way to think of earthly pains and sorrows,—that they are light beside the evils of the soul,—that they are only to last a moment, as it were, in comparison with eternity,—above all, that they may be the means, if we bear them patiently, of raising us to a height of glory. I spoke a while ago of God's medicines. Now if God can extract health and strength for his people even from the poison of temptation, much more does he do so from the bitterness of affliction. Therefore let us never be impatient under the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when we are rebuked by him; for "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Now chastening for the present seemeth "grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised thereby" (Heb. xii. 6. 11). Grievous then as the chastening may be, if it yields the fruit of righteousness, if it works out a weight of glory for you, if it prepares and refines you for the happiness and the purity of heaven,—would you forgo it? Of some it is written, that "through much tribulation they

must enter into the kingdom of God." Would you give up the kingdom of God, the everlasting joys of heaven, rather than go through the tribulation, which by God's appointment is to lead you thither? Rather glory in your tribulation, remembering that "tribulation worketh patience."

Seeing therefore that worldly afflictions are grievous so long as they last, we may indeed pray against them. But such a prayer must be offered up with a full sense of their comparative insignificance, lest we be troubled by them above measure. It must be offered up moreover in humble reliance on the wisdom and goodness of our heavenly Father, lest peradventure we should be praying against a blessing. In a word, we must pray against them with an *if*. But our sins need no *if* in praying against them. Their danger, their burthen, their grievousness, their shame, their curse, we know too well from sad experience. God himself has declared them to be evil. Therefore they should be the evils uppermost in our minds, when we say, "Deliver us from evil."

I have now explained the last petition in the third part of the Lord's Prayer: and with this the short form of it, which we find in St Luke, ends. St Matthew gives a longer form, which we are accustomed to make use of, and adds a fourth

part by way of conclusion: "for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever." The meaning of this conclusion it will not take many words to shew. It contains our reasons for praying to God: because the kingdom is his,—he is the king and ruler of all the world; the power is his,—so he can grant our requests; and the glory of our deliverance is and will be his. By our salvation he is and will be glorified: and our duty is to seek not our own glory, but his, which endureth for ever and ever. Herewith the prayer ends, by leaving the image of eternity before us.

Thus have I endeavoured to shew you as much as I can of the meaning of this wonderful prayer. What love to God, what desires of holiness, what a disregard of earthly things, what longings for heavenly things, have we found in it! And why, suppose you, did our Lord teach us a prayer so full of all these blessed feelings? Was it not that, by our saying it over day after day, the excellence of such feelings might be kept ever before our minds, and the love of them might be wrought into our hearts? This is the true purpose of the Lord's Prayer: if it do not this in some degree, it does nothing. Therefore I say not to you, repeat the Lord's Prayer, but practise the Lord's

Prayer: make its petitions the rule and model of your lives: and may God prosper your endeavours to practise it, to the health and comfort of your souls!

SERMON XVIII.

IDOLATRY.

1 JOHN v. 21.

Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

"THY commandment is exceeding broad," says the Psalmist, speaking of God s holy law. It is well to bear these words in mind, whenever we are reading any part of that law, above all when we are looking at the Ten Commandments, as they are called, which God gave to the children of Israel, after he had brought them out of Egypt. Nothing can be of greater importance than to have a right understanding on this matter; and a right understanding must be a full one. It will not do to know a quarter of the meaning of God's commandments, or half their meaning: you must know their whole meaning: else you will never wish to try to keep them wholly, as it behoves every Christian to do. Now when we remember that God's com-

mandment is exceeding broad, we are warned that there is a great deal in it, and are led to look for more than may at first sight meet the eye. If a man were to hear that a friend had left him an estate, and went to the spot, and saw a narrow slip of land, he might at first think he had seen the whole of it. But if he was told the estate was very large, he would feel sure that there must be something more: he would say to himself, "This little strip of land can never be the large estate which my friend has left me:" and he would set about inquiring diligently how far the estate reached. So should it be with God's commandments. At first thought, when a man hears that the sixth commandment is, "thou shalt not murder," the seventh, "thou shalt not commit adultery," the eighth, "thou shalt not steal," he may fancy that nothing more is forbidden by these words, than just the very crimes mentioned in them, of murder, and adultery, and theft. But when he calls to mind that God's commandments are exceeding broad, if he has any power of thinking in his mind, and really wishes to please God, he will begin to say to himself, "There must be something more in these commandments than I thought for; or the Psalmist would never have called them exceeding broad. If murder only means what is commonly called murder, and nothing more, there is nothing

broad in that. If adultery only means what is commonly called adultery, and nothing more, there is nothing broad in that. If stealing only means what is commonly called stealing, and nothing more, there is nothing very broad in that. These commandments must have some wider and deeper meaning. What can that meaning be?" Thus the man's curiosity is set to work: he begins to study and to search; and perhaps after a time, in our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, he finds out the exceeding breadth and depth and height of God's law. For this is the way we ought to study God's commandments, not in a spirit of bondage, or of undutiful unwillingness, but in the spirit of true children, with hearts full of reverence and love. God's commandments are not grievous, but just, and wise, and merciful, and good and wholesome for us. So that it behoves us not to listen to them with slow hearts, nor to look at them with half-closed eyes, like people who are afraid of seeing too much of a thing. We should gaze at them with eyes wide open, and search into them on every side, that we may be sure of not overlooking or missing any part of any one of them. None but rogues and felons look at a law to find out how they may evade it. Would it not then be a shame and a sin to look at God's law, as rogues and felons look at human laws? Rather should

we look at it in the spirit of sons,—since sons we are called to be,—with a wish to make as much of it as possible, that, seeing its full reach, we may strive to keep it to the utmost.

This, for example, is the way we ought to look at the first and second commandments, which are so nearly connected, that they may well be considered as branches of one and the same law. The first forbids us to have any god, but the one true God. The second forbids us to make any image or likeness of any created thing, for the purpose of bowing down to it and worshiping it. These two commandments, I say, may be regarded in a manner as parts of one and the same commandment. For there is hardly any way in which mankind have been drawn off from the worship of the one true God to the worship of false gods, so much as by the setting up of images, and the falling down to them and worshiping them. Thus we read in the Book of Wisdom (xiv. 12), "the devising of idols was the beginning of spiritual fornication, and the invention of them the corruption of life." Strange as it may seem to us that reasonable beings should bow down to images of wood and stone, the work of their own hands, and should worship these images as gods, yet, at the time when our Lord came into the world, this idolatry or idol-worship was spread over the whole earth. Every nation, except the

Jews, was sunk in idol-worship. The world was full of idols, and therewith of false gods: so that almost everything was worshipt in it, except the one true God, the only Maker of heaven and earth. He, and he alone, was lost and forgotten amid the mob of deities that were thus swarming in every quarter of the world. The yoke of idolatry lay heavy upon every people and nation and language; nor was that yoke broken, until our Saviour sent forth the preachers of his gospel, to bring all mankind to the knowledge of the one true God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

After our Saviour's teaching, one might have thought things would have gone on better, at least in his own Church. But, alas! the same causes will ever produce the same effects. Instead of the images of heathen gods, which had been overthrown, the churches after a time were again filled with the images of apostles, evangelists, martyrs, and other holy men. No one can believe that, when these images of saints were first introduced, it was done with any design of worshiping them. Had any one told the persons who first set them up, that such would be the consequence, doubtless they would have exclaimed, "It is impossible. What! Christians, the disciples of Jesus Christ, turn idolaters again! Christians worship any one but God and his Christ! It can never be. We

are only setting up these images of holy men, to keep alive the memory of their great piety in the minds of the common people. But as to worshiping them . . that will never come to pass." Such would doubtless have been the language of these wellmeaning but mistaken persons, who first introduced images into christian churches, if they had been told that the time would come when these images would be reverenced, and the saints themselves would be worshipt, more than God. They would certainly have said, "It can never happen." Yet happen it did: and if it had not pleased God to break our bonds, as he did at the time of the Reformation,—if it had not pleased him to pour out his Spirit upon this land, and to raise up holy men amongst us, men full of zeal and piety, champions of God and his Christ, who with that mighty weapon, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, smote the outward and visible idolatry of the land, so that image and saint fell to the ground before them, just as Dagon of old in the Philistine temple fell before the ark of the Lord,—had it not been for this great deliverance, we too should at this day have been in the same darkness, in which so many other people are still lying: we should still have been praying to saints, and bowing down to their images.

Here are two great and merciful deliverances vouchsafed by Almighty God to this land. The first deliverance was from the gross darkness of heathen ignorance: the second, from the twilight of Romish superstition. The first was a deliverance from the worshiping of idol gods: the second, from the worshiping of idol saints. Such great things has God done for this land, more than for most others. Ought not our thankfulness then to be in some degree answerable to his goodness? ought we not to love and serve him better than they to whom he has been less bountiful? Above all, must we not be utterly without excuse, if, after all that God has done to clear the land from idolatry, we are wicked enough to make fresh idols for ourselves? The poor heathen has an excuse to offer for worshiping his gods of stone: he has been taught to do so by his parents. The papist has an excuse to offer for reverencing the images of his saints: he has been misled by his priests, and has never had the Scriptures opened to him. But what excuse can we bring forward? we who have never seen an idol or an image,—we who are protestants, and the children of protestants,—we who have the Bible in our hand to teach us better,—what excuse can any of us plead before our heavenly Judge, if we break his first commandment, and do dishonour to his name, by choosing

some other god to worship? Besides, the idols of the heathens are their only gods: but we, in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are blest with the knowledge of a God, great and perfect enough to engage all our thoughts, merciful and loving enough to attract all our affections. Were our hearts large as the universe, God is great enough to fill them.

But perhaps you may think that no Englishman of the present day is ever guilty of the dreadful sin of idolatry. No Englishman, you will tell me, for the last hundred years, has ever thought of worshiping images or idols. Therefore the first and second commandments no way concern us, except as reasons for giving thanks to God, who has made us so much better than the rest of the world. This is a very natural thought; and I doubt not many think so. Very many, I doubt not, when they hear the first two commandments read on a Sunday morning, instead of heartily praying to God to have mercy on them for their breaches of this law,—instead of beseeching him to incline their hearts to keep it better for the future,—are readier to say, like the Pharisee in the parable, "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, idolaters, worshipers of graven images, breakers of the first and second commandments." But though it may be natural to think it an im-

possible thing for an Englishman of the present day to be an idolater, is it right to think so? Does a man who thinks so, think rightly? Is idolatry, the breach of the first commandment, is the having other gods beside the one true God, a sin unknown in England at this day? is it a sin which we can truly say that none of us have ever been guilty of? It is true, there are no idolaters in England, who are outwardly and visibly such: there are none who worship graven images, and put what the prophet Ezekiel calls (xiv. 3) the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face. But are there none who are idolaters inwardly and spiritually? Are there none who have set up their idols in their hearts? For observe, there are two things that the prophet Ezekiel joins together in the passage just referred to; and against both of them he threatens heavy judgements. There is the putting the stumblingblock of our iniquity before our face; and there is also the setting up of idols in our hearts. The first of these two things is that outward and visible idolatry, which the heathen are guilty of, and from which this land through God's grace is altogether free. But the other kind of idolatry, the setting up of idols in the heart, is much the worse of the two; at least if it be in a heart which has been called to the love of Christ; if, instead of keeping our souls pure, as

befits temples of the Holy Ghost, we profane and pollute them by devoting them to vain and perishable, or as too many do, to abominable things. "If any man defile the temple of God," says the apostle, "him will God destroy" (1 Cor. iii. 17). But the heart of a Christian is the temple of God: it is the sanctuary which, far above any building made with hands, God delights to take up his abode in. Shall any one then dare to defile God's own temple, by setting up an idol therein, to provoke him to jealousy, and, as it were, insult him to his face? Just consider what your feelings would be, were a heathen king to conquer this land, and to set up the images of his gods in the beautiful cathedral at Salisbury, where we and our fathers for so many generations have been accustomed to worship God and his Son. Yet the heart of a Christian is far more beautiful, and far more precious, and far dearer to God, than that cathedral. The cathedral at Salisbury will not last for ever: Christ did not die for it: he did not purchase it with his own blood. But us he has bought: for us he has paid a price, that we might be his for all eternity. What then must be his feelings, to see his own hearts defiled and polluted by being given up to idols!

For, as I have already hinted, there are divers ways of breaking the first and second command-

ments, beside worshiping Baal, as wicked Ahab did, and bowing down to stocks and stones. Many a man has set up his idols in his heart, who never dreamt of worshiping a graven image. The root and essence of idolatry, as St Paul teaches us, is the worshiping and serving God's creatures more than God himself. Whoever then serves any one of God's creatures more than he serves God,—whoever loves any one of God's creatures more than he loves God,—whoever makes any one of God's creatures more an object of his thoughts, and allows it to fill a greater space in his mind than God fills,—that man is guilty of idolatry, in the spiritual and christian sense of the word. When I say God's creatures, I mean, not living creatures merely, but creatures of every kind,—everything which God has made for us, or enabled us to make for ourselves,—all the sweet and relishing things we can enjoy in this world,—pleasures, honours, riches, comforts of every kind. Therefore if any man is foolish and wicked enough to give up his heart to any one of these creatures, and suffers himself to be drawn away from serving God by it, he is an idolater in the sight of heaven.

But if this be so, the question, Are there any idolaters in England? is answered already. Looking at the first two commandments in their fulness, and understanding them according to their ex-

ceeding breadth, who is there who has not transgrest them at some time of his life? Who is there, except only the sincere and pious Christian, who is not breaking them daily? Well might St John warn us, as he does in the text, to keep ourselves from idols, and make this the concluding precept in his letter. For if the goods of this world may all become so many idols, luring our hearts away from God, then is the land full of idols of a thousand kinds,—idols for all ages, for all classes, for all tempers, for all hearts. There are idols for the worldlyminded, and idols for the generous,—idols for the intemperate, and idols for the prudent: there are idols for the affectionate; and again there is an idol for the selfish. Young and old have their idols; married and unmarried have their idols; rich and poor have their idols. From these idols keep yourselves, my brethren: and whenever you hear the first and second commandments read, pray to God more heartily than you have yet done, to forgive you your breaches of these two laws, and to incline your hearts to keep them for the future.

But it may be well to go a little into particulars. The covetous man then, to begin with him, is an idolater. Of this there can be no doubt; for St Paul expressly tells us, in his Epistle to the Colossians (iii. 5), that covetousness, or, as the word may per-

haps be more closely rendered, insatiableness and greediness, is idolatry; and again, in the Epistle to the Ephesians (v. 5), the covetous man,—that is, the insatiable and greedy man, the man whom there is no satisfying,—is said to be an idolater. It matters little what the man is greedy of,—whether he is greedy of money, or whether he is greedy of business, or whether he is greedy of land, or whether he is greedy of meat and drink, or whether he is greedy of praise and honour and distinction,—if a man is greedy of any earthly thing, and does not know when he has had enough, and is ever longing and craving after it, and wishing to add more to more, the sentence is express against that man: St Paul has declared him to be an idolater. The reason is plain. The covetous and greedy man has given that place in his heart to earthly things, which ought to be kept for heavenly things. Instead of considering the things of this world as mere necessaries, and setting the prime of his affections on things above, he looks on the former as the real good; whereas our Saviour has told us that there is none really good but one, that is, God. Perhaps however a man may say, What does it signify whether we look on the things of this life as necessaries and conveniences, or whether we deem them to be really goods? I answer, it signifies very much: for,

when we want anything, food, raiment, furniture, house, lands, simply because such things are necessary and convenient to us, it is easy to see there must be a limit to our want somewhere. Take food, for instance. If a man eats simply because it is necessary to eat, in order to support life, if he drinks only to satisfy his thirst, it is clear he will soon be satisfied. He will soon have eaten and drunk enough; and he will know when he has had enough, and will not wish for more. He will eat and drink to get rid of his hunger and thirst, just as he washes his face and hands to refresh himself and get rid of the dirt. No man, after his hands have been washed quite clean, goes on rubbing and scrubbing them over and over again: yet many a greedy man will go on eating and drinking after he has had his fill. Why so? Because greedy men, the glutton and the drunkard, take delight in eating and drinking, and do not take a delight in washing. They wash, like rational beings, because it is necessary and wholesome and seemly; and so they wash enough, and no more. They eat and drink, not because it is necessary, but because they think it a good thing: they take a pleasure in it, and love it; and so they eat and drink to excess. For to that which is good, there is no limit in the heart of man: of that we can never have enough. Here then is the great difference between seeking a

thing, because it is necessary or useful to us, and desiring it as a real good. In the one case there is a limit to our wishes, in the other none. In the one case we have enough, when our needs are satisfied; in the other case we never have enough. We always wish and crave and pant and hunger after more: and such craving and hungering is idolatrous. It is mistaking the creature for the Creator, and misapplying to a poor, unworthy, mean, and perishable thing, those infinite yearnings of the heart which belong of right to the Maker and Ruler of the universe. He, and he alone, is infinite: therefore he alone is worthy of being loved and sought for with all our boundless longings and desires. To set up any worldly thing as the end and object of those longings, is to throw away on what is bounded and perishable, the worship due to what is infinite and eternal. Therefore it is as plainly and certainly idolatry, as if we bowed the knee to Chemosh or to Ashtaroth. I say, the worship: because longing is worship, desire is worship, the best of all worship, the worship of the heart. He then who gives his heart to any creature, worships it, yea, and sacrifices to it the best member that he has. If this be not arrant idolatry, I know not what is. I have mentioned the greedy desire of meat and drink, partly because everybody must know what that means, and partly because St Paul,

in telling us of people whose belly is their god, has brought the instance home to our present purpose. But what is true of greediness of food, is equally true of every other kind of greediness. All insatiable longing after earthly things, all grasping and restless striving, is a part of that covetousness which is idolatry. The covetous man defiles and pollutes his heart, which is the temple of the Holy Ghost, as the Jews defiled and polluted the temple at Jerusalem, by setting up the tables of the money-changers in it, and filling it with buying and selling. Thus does the covetous man fill the temple of his heart with busy thoughts of money-getting and buying and selling. He sets up the abomination of gain in what ought to be the sanctuary of the Most High. But if the covetous man be an idolater, what does he worship? Our Saviour tells us in the Sermon on the Mount, where, in warning his disciples not to give up their hearts to taking thought about worldly and perishable things, he uses those remarkable words, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." The covetous man then serves Mammon. He has taken Mammon for his guide and for his god: and so he directly breaks the first commandment, which forbids us to have any god except the God of heaven.

But Mammon is not the only heathen god whose worship is carried on in the hearts of En-

glishmen, calling themselves Christians, and Protestants too, at this day. What shall we say of Belial, the fleshliest spirit that ever seduced man to sin? He is the god of lust, of riot, of uncleanness, of unruliness. The impure, fornicators and adulterers, lovers of misrule of every kind, are called in Scripture sons of Belial, and children of Belial; just as the pious and upright are called sons of God, and children of God. Can we say then that there are no children of Belial, no worshipers of Belial now in England? The reports of our courts of law prove that there are thousands and thousands; and I am afraid that those who are brought before a court of law, are not one in a hundred. Yet every such worshiper of Belial is plainly guilty of idolatry, and is living in the open breach of the first and great commandment.

Or look at Moloch, the god of hatred and of every fierce passion: has he no children, no worshipers in the land? men who pay him the service he is best pleased with,—the service of an envious, rancorous, malicious, and festered heart. As every lustful thought and impure desire is an act of worship to Belial,—as every greedy thought and covetous desire is an act of worship to Mammon,—so every spiteful and revengeful thought, every feeling of ill-will, every desire to do any one an injury, everything like pleasure at our

neighbour's hurt,—all these are acts of worship and heart-service to the hateful and cruel Moloch. Is Moloch then without worshipers in England, or in any part of England, at this day? Are there none who serve him? none who serve him faithfully, and zealously, and constantly?

Would, my brethren, we were as faithful and zealous and constant in the service of the most high God, as too many are,—as all perhaps have been at some time or other,—in the service of one or other of these idols! Would that we only gave the Lord of heaven and earth as much as the worshipers of Moloch and Belial and Mammon readily give to them! Then should we give God everything that he requires. We should give him our hearts; we should give him our thoughts; we should give him our time; we should give him our labour and diligence. With all these do we serve the idols which dare to rival the God of heaven, the idol of hate, the idol of lust, the idol of covetousness. These gods, these devils rather, have no scant share of service paid to them. For them their votaries are eager to work. To gratify his revenge, to gratify his unlawful passions, to heap up fresh piles of riches, a man will plan, and toil, and risk money, if need be, and will even deny himself in many things. Who does as much for God? Who toils as much in God's service, and spends as much

thought on it, and makes as many sacrifices for it, as the servants of sin will often to pamper their sins? Alas! all the while they are only fattening themselves for the altar of wrath, and gathering the fuel that is to consume them.

But though I have spoken to you of so many idols, I have still to mention the commonest of all, the idol which has the most, the most constant, the devoutest worshipers; which reigns indeed in every heart, unless it has been cast out by the Spirit of God. This idol, my brethren, is self. Self is the great idol of all. He is your idol, and mine, and was the idol of our fathers before us, and will be the idol of your children after you, when you are sleeping in your graves. Therefore is our Saviour so urgent on us in many places to deny ourselves: because he knows that the traitor, self, has surprised our hearts, and fortified himself within them, as in a stronghold; so that it is almost impossible to get rid of him, unless we starve him out. So long as we feed him and strengthen him by gratifying his wilfulness and whims, so long will he continue in possession. Nor will even starving him out be enough of itself, unless we add frequent prayer thereto. For this is the spirit of which our Lord said, that it goeth not out, except by prayer and fasting. Mortify yourselves therefore, brethren: strive to crush every

feeling within you, that would lift up its head against the will of God: strive to break the neck of your own will, and to make it bend meekly and patiently under the yoke of Christ. Above all, pray heartily and frequently to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that he will come and set up his own image in your heart, and sprinkle it with his purifying blood, and hallow it with his sanctifying Spirit.

SERMON XIX.

THE THIRD AND FOURTH COMMANDMENTS.

Acts x 5.

What God has cleansed, that call not thou common.

I have chosen this text for the sake of saying a few words to you about the third and fourth commandments, which have this point of agreement, that they both enjoin us to reverence and hallow things appertaining to God. The third commandment teaches us to hallow God's holy name, and not to profane it: the fourth commandment teaches us to hallow God's holy day, and not to profane it. The reason for both is the same, namely, that the things which God has hallowed by uniting them to himself, we are to reckon holy. Be it the day which the Lord hath made, or be it the name which the Lord has chosen, in each case it is the Lord's. He has been pleased to set it apart for himself: he has made it sacred and cleansed it: therefore

we are not to call it common; that is, we are not to make use of it for common purposes; we are not to treat it lightly and as a common thing. We are to set a distinction and a difference between the Lord's name and other words, between the Lord's day and other days.

But if we are to reverence God's name, and not to profane it, because it is the name of God Most High,—if we are to keep the sabbath-day holy, and not to profane it, because it is the day which the Lord has hallowed,—we may be sure the principle does not stop here. Everything else which God has in any way set apart for his own, and put his mark on,—everything else which in any way belongs more peculiarly to him,—his word, his ordinances, his house, his people,—all these, you will see after a moment's thought, come under the same rule. They are all things which God has cleansed: therefore we must not call them common. He has set them apart for his own service: he has fenced them off, as it were, from the waste of the world, and has enclosed them for his own use. Hence there is the same sort of difference between them and all merely worldly and common things, as there is between a garden and Salisbury Plain. No one who knows how to behave himself, would bring a horse into a garden, or walk over the strawberry beds, or trample down

the flowers. But in riding from here to Salisbury everybody would feel himself at liberty, while crossing the downs, to gallop over the turf at pleasure. Well! the same difference which there is between common down and a cultivated garden, the same is there also between worldly days, worldly books, worldly names, worldly people, and God's day, God's book, God's name, and God's people. The former are common, and may be treated as such: the latter are not common; because God has taken them to himself, and brought them within the limits of his sanctuary, and thrown the safeguard of his holiness around them. In a word, they belong to God, and therefore are not to be treated as if they belonged to man.

It is true, that in one sense everything belongs to God. For everything was made by him: the whole earth is the Lord's, and all that is therein. In this view of the matter every day may be called the Lord's day, as well as Sunday: so too may every man living be called his, as well as the holiest of the apostles. All in this sense are his: that is, we are all his property and his subjects; because he is the Maker and the Ruler of everything in heaven and earth. Therefore those who are heartily desirous of doing right, and of giving God his own as far as may be, would never think of unhallowing or profaning any one act or mo-

ment of their lives. They would never think of keeping back any part of their time, or of their thoughts, from God's service; because they know that he has a right to every part of them, and that they ought to be wholly and altogether his. It is in this spirit that the apostle bids us pray *always*. He does not say, Pray when you get up, or, when you go to bed, or, when you go to church, but always. In like manner he enjoins us to seek God's glory in the smallest things, as well as in the greatest. "Whether ye eat or drink (he says), or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." But though all this be so, it by no means follows that some things may not belong to God more nearly and peculiarly than others. Monday for example belongs to God as well as Sunday: but it does not belong to him as much and as exclusively; for the best of reasons,—because he has not been pleased to make it so. He is by right the master and owner of every day in the week equally: but he has been pleased to leave the six days open and unenclosed for the common business of life,—for ploughing and sowing, and reaping and harvesting, and buying and selling; while the seventh day he has thought fit to reserve for himself, and has set it apart to be employed in his worship. Thus it comes to pass that, though all the seven days are equally his by right, yet Sunday by his

appointment is more entirely and peculiarly his day than the other six. What is true of Sundays and working-days, is equally true of prayer. Though we are enjoined to be always praying in a manner,—that is, we are to keep a sense of God's power and goodness always alive in our minds, and are to look up to him for help in whatever we take in hand,—yet we are not to be always offering up prayers on our knees. The good Christian will live in such a way, that his whole life will be one continual prayer; yet on the other hand he will not think that he is thereby excused from having fixed times for regular prayer. He will pray by himself: he will pray with his family: he will pray with his fellow Christians in the house of God. On these occasions the feelings of devotion, which are always alive and burning in his heart, will blaze up into a flame, and will find vent in words: the silent, quiet, habitual piety of every day and every hour will be heightened for a time into open adoration, in which the whole man will be given up to prayer; and lips and thoughts, heart and mind, will join to entreat a blessing from the Lord, and to magnify the God of his salvation.

In a word, no day, no action, no thought, no moment of our lives ought to be separate from God: some days however, some actions, some things and persons are his more entirely and more directly

than others; and these we should reverence and hallow above the rest. Such appears to be the general spirit of the third and fourth commandments. But it will be useful to take a nearer view of them, and to see what each of them more particularly enjoins and forbids.

We will begin with the third commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." Now what is taking the name of the Lord in vain? That is the first thing to be made out; and then the sense of the commandment will be clear. To take the name of the Lord in vain, is to take it into our mouths or use it in any light or trifling or unworthy manner. This may be done in two ways; either by calling God to witness to a lie,—for lies and falsehood of all kinds are in many places of Scripture called vanity; or else it may be done by using that holy name on small and irreverent occasions; for light and empty things are also called vanity. Whoever then calls God to witness falsely, takes his name in vain; and whoever uses God's name lightly and irreverently, takes it in vain. What I have said of God's name will of course apply equally to Jesus Christ; for he is God. Indeed it applies to every holy and sacred word or name. So that all false swearing, and all idle swearing of every sort, is forbidden by this commandment.

Of the wickedness, the utter madness of swearing falsely, and calling the God of truth to witness to a lie, I shall say nothing to you. False swearing has never been the vice of Englishmen: and they who wish for a sermon about it, may read one in the marketplace at Devizes. The shocking story there recorded, of the wretched woman who forswore herself, and fell down dead, is proof enough that our God is neither blind nor deaf, and that he will not suffer himself to be mocked, or his name to be invoked falsely. True, he does not always strike at the instant, as he did then: but wo to that head over which the blow of God's wrath keeps hanging, only to fall on it in the next world with a weight of punishment insupportable!

Though false swearing however, I would fain hope, is not a common vice among Englishmen, idle and profane swearing is so, and that to a very great and strange degree. I call it a strange degree; because it surely is strange that a sin, to which the temptations are so trifling, a sin which yields neither profit nor pleasure, should meet one at every step in a christian land. Go into the streets of any town, go to any place where a number of persons have got together; and whether they are working, or whether they are playing, whether they are angry, or whether they are merry, you can hardly pass by a knot of half a dozen English-

men, let them be doing what they may, without having your ears wounded by some vain and wicked oath or curse. But why do I say a knot of Englishmen? when you all know that a man does not need company to swear in. Wherever there is a mouth to swear with, you are but too likely to hear swearing. A man will swear at a horse, at a dog, at a bat, at a spade: for everything, and for nothing, many an Englishman will swear. Now is not this strange? May I not call it strange? Does it not seem strange to you, my brethren, in your cooler moments, that among Christians,—among a people who know that God himself has forbidden them to swear,—among a people who call themselves Christians, and would be very angry if I told them they were not Christians,—is it not passing strange that among such a people,—who have been taught by Christ and his apostles to pray always, and to swear never,—there should be so little praying and so much swearing? Truly an Indian, on first coming amongst us, might be led to fancy us the godliest people in the world, from hearing the sacred names of God and Christ at every corner of every street. He might say to himself, "What a holy, what a pious people this must be! Every third man I fall in with is praying." But when he had been a while longer

in the country, and had grown better used to our customs, and had found out that this praying, as he fancied it,—this invoking and uttering and repeating of the most sacred names on every occasion,—was all swearing, what would he think of us then? Would he not begin to think us most daringly impious and profane? profane, for using the most sacred words in such a light and careless manner; daringly impious, for calling the all-powerful Ruler of the universe to look down from his throne above the heavens, to witness—what? a petty dispute . . a trifling accident . . a jest. Truly these are things well worthy the notice of the King of heaven, that we should call on him by name to look down from his throne of glory and behold them.

I am well aware, that many a man has gone on swearing year after year, without ever thinking seriously about the matter. He may have fallen into the habit when he was very young: perhaps he may have caught it from his father: or he may have learnt it at school, or when at work with other lads older and wickeder than himself: hearing them swear, he may have thought it a fine manly thing to do so too: and thus in course of time the trick of swearing may have grown upon him, until he hardly knows when he is guilty of it. But whether we know it, or whether we know

it not, whether we do it thinkingly or thoughtlessly, a sin it is most assuredly and most clearly: for it is a plain breach of one of God's commandments. Nor do I know, when a man is called to account for this his sin at the bar of God's judgement-seat, that he will much mend the matter by pleading, that he had been guilty of it so often, at last it became a second nature to him, and he got to swear ever and anon without so much as intending it. For God perhaps may ask him in return, "How camest thou by that nature?" What will the swearer answer to such a question? He cannot say, that God gave him this nature. He cannot say, that his tongue was made to curse and swear, rather than to bless and pray. He cannot even say, that he did not know better. For every one knows that swearing is wrong. What answer then can the swearer make to God's just and searching question, "How camest thou by that nature?" He must remain speechless, like the man who came to the marriage-feast without having on a wedding-garment. You all know the sentence which was pronounced against him: "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness."

But though every man must know swearing to be wrong, many, I would fain hope, can never have thought of it as an open breach of God's command-

ments: many, I would fain hope, if they did so think, would not be guilty of it. They swear, as I said just now, from habit: and unluckily no habit is formed more easily, none, when formed, is harder to break. Therefore let me beg those, who have not yet fallen into this most foolish and sinful habit,—let me entreat all those, whose consciences are not yet so hardened and blunted, that they can take the names of their God and Saviour into their mouths without knowing it, —let me beg and entreat all such persons to beware how they entangle themselves in a besetting sin, from which, if they once fall into it, they may never be able to get free again. You are still safe, I would say to all such, if you will only keep so. Your hearts are still soft: why harden them? Why run with your eyes open into the devil's snare? Why find a pleasure, against nature and against grace, in learning to break one of God's commandments, and to take his holy name in vain? Let me entreat all parents too, who value the salvation of their children, to check the first beginnings of this evil practice in them. Stop them at the first profane word. Shew them how foolish, how unmeaning, how sinful it is. Should they fancy it manly, teach them what true manliness is. —that there is no manliness in doing wrong, but in doing right,—that the true manly part is not to fol-

low others in their evil ways, but to act up to what we know to be our duty, not suffering ourselves to be blown out of the straight path by the gust of evil example, but keeping our footing and our course right onward, as we may do in spite of all the evil example in the world, if we will only pray to God for his help. In his might we may all be made strong enough to stand the buffet of a real temptation, much more to keep our ground against a sin, which we can neither plead any inclination to, nor excuse by any natural infirmity,—a sin therefore easily checked, if we are only watchful to stop it at the outset.

To those who have already formed the habit of swearing, to those who are already in the snare, and feel the weight of evil custom clinging to their tongue,—what shall I say to them? I will say to them, Your sin, I would hope, began in carelessness: try if you cannot cure it by becoming watchful. In all your prayers make it a special petition that the Lord will put a watch before your mouth, and will keep the door of your lips. I do not say that even by this means a deeply-rooted habit can be weeded out in a few weeks. Look at a field which has been long neglected. You all know how very difficult it is to get it clean. It is not a single ploughing, nor a single turnip-crop, nor a single hoeing, that will do. Yet

there is not a field in all England which has been neglected half so much as the soul of the habitual swearer. It must needs take time therefore to root the habit out of him; and nothing but care and time with God's blessing will do it. But if a man prays against the habit, his conscience after a time will be awakened: he will no longer take God's name in vain without thinking of it. By degrees he will get to check the rising oath: and at last his tongue will unlearn its swearing, and be ready only for blessing and for prayer. Happy, happy man in that case! yea, happy, as he now is miserable! He will have gained the greatest of all victories, a victory over himself. He will have broken through the snare in which the Evil One held him, and will have gained a deliverance from the most fearful peril. Instead of the language of devils, he will have learnt the language of angels, and even in this world will speak the words of heaven.

As the third commandment commands us to hallow God's holy name, so does the fourth command us to hallow his holy day. How? By abstaining from all manner of work. "Six days shall ye labour, and do all that ye have to do: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord your God: in it ye shall do no manner of work." The curse of labour, under which man was to earn and eat his bread, was taken off for one day in seven for

all ranks and classes of mankind, the poor as well as the rich, nay even for the beasts of the field, which man employs in his service. Think a little what a blessing this is to the poor, that God by express command has kept one day out of every seven for them, on which they are to rest from their toil,—a day on which their masters have no claim on their services, and are bound to require nothing from them, beyond what is absolutely needful. This, I say, is a very great blessing to the poor; and loving the poor, as my master Christ has taught me to do, most heartily do I thank God for it. For wherever Sunday is kept as it should be, there the poor cannot be entirely ground down: they cannot be made slaves of, as they have been in so many heathen countries. They have one day in seven which they can call their own,—a day on which the distinction between master and servant is, comparatively speaking, laid aside, and we all meet together in the house of God as brethren and as fellow Christians. This great blessing and privilege the poor owe to God and to his religion.

But God does not bestow his blessings on the poor alone, though it not seldom happens that the poor come in for the largest share of them. The blessed rest of God's holy day is appointed not only for the poor, but also for the rich, if they will only

let it be so. It is a day for the poor to rest from the work of their hands: it is a day for the rich to rest from the work of their heads, from the anxieties of worldly thoughts, from the troubles and cares of business. Only too many of them will not enter into this rest. They have been walking so long through the rough places of the earth, that, when they come home, the mud is sticking to their shoes, and the burs and brambles to their clothes; and they have grown so used to them, that they feel quite uncomfortable if they are taken off. So besotted are many persons with the love of the world, that, instead of flinging all its cares away from them, in order that they may enjoy the blessed rest of the Sunday, they set apart their Sunday for looking over and casting up their accounts. Though they cannot blow or stir the fire in Mammon's furnace, they are determined at all events to snuff in its smoke.

God, my brethren, has called us away altogether from the service of Mammon on the Sunday. On this day, he has said, ye shall be wholly mine: Mammon shall have no part in you. But when he called us away from the service of Mammon, it was not that we should pass from it to the service of Belial, or to the service of Moloch. We are to rest on the sabbath-day from all manner of work, not merely from all work in the service of

Mammon, but also from all work in the service of Belial, and in the service of Moloch. Yet how many spend the rest of the holy sabbath in drinking and gaming, and all manner of reveling, the natural end of which is quarrels and brawls! How many, after coming to church in the morning, go and pass their evening at the alehouse, thus shewing that the worship they have been pretending to offer up to God, has been nothing but a shameful mockery! How many squander the chief part of the day at the alehouse, without coming to church at all! Sooth to say, I verily believe, there is more drunkenness, more swearing, more rioting, more licentiousness of all kinds in England on a Sunday, than on any other day of the week.

Now how does all this come to pass? In other words, what is the reason that in this christian land Sunday, instead of being kept holier than other days, should by so many persons be kept as the most unholy day of all the seven? The reason is, that, whereas God ordained Sunday to be a day of rest, the world has turned it into a day of idleness: and idleness is ever the fruitful mother of vices. Sunday however is not meant to be a day of idleness. It is a day of rest from the labours of the world, in order that it may be a day holy to God, that it may be given up alto-

gether to his service, that it may be employed in learning his will, in praying to him, and in praising him.

And here I would remind you how all God's commandments hang together; how they are knit and woven together like a fine web, wherein you cannot loosen a single stitch, without danger of unraveling the whole. We know from St James (ii. 10), that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." This he is, even if he were to keep all the rest of the law. But can any one do this? Can any one be sure that, while he breaks the law in one point, he shall be able to keep all the rest of it? So far from this, that, if a man lives in the breach of any one of God's commandments, if he allows himself to indulge in any one sin, none can tell where he will stop. There is no letting any one devil into our souls, without the risk of his going and fetching seven other devils wickeder than himself: and the purer the house may hitherto have been, the more eager will they be to come and lodge in it. Thus was it when David allowed himself to look with impure eyes upon Bathsheba: the lust of the eye led to adultery; and adultery led on to murder. You know how weeds spread, how soon they run to seed, and how a score may spring up from the seed of a single one. So is it with

vices. They too shed their seed, and increase and multiply in such a way, that a man who is indulging in any one evil practice now, will be most fortunate if he has not a couple such by this time twelvemonth, and half a dozen more the year after. Now of all the commandments the one that people are the aptest to make light of, and to begin by breaking, is this one which commands us to keep the sabbath holy. Those who would think it a shameful thing to lie or to steal, those who would think it a horrible thing to commit murder or adultery, young lads more especially, will idle about on Sunday, and waste the precious hours which God has given them to learn his will, and to pray to him for strength that they may do it. They know not what they are doing. They think there is little harm in this. All those shortsighted, worldly-minded persons too, who look no further than the immediate outward consequences of an action, cannot see much harm in it. "Poor lads! (they will say,) they have been hard at work all the week: why should they not have the Sunday to amuse themselves?" And yet this one fault,—let me rather say, this one sin, of sabbath-breaking, has been the mother of thousands and thousands of crimes. Half the criminals, whose lives pay the forfeit of their offenses, half the criminals who

end their days on the gallows, begin their career of wickedness with breaking the sabbath. By keeping away from church, they deprive themselves of all instruction: they gradually lose all knowledge and all fear of God: they cease to pray for his help, and so they are left without help: temptation comes upon temptation; they fall from one wickedness to another; until at length even in this world justice overtakes them, and gives them over to a shameful death.

On the other hand it is by endeavouring heartily and diligently to keep the whole of God's law in all its breadth and fulness, that we shall best gain strength to keep any one part of it. For all the commandments support and uphold and strengthen each other, and form a fence round such as continue within them, through which the fouler temptations can hardly enter. When a man strives thus to serve God with his whole heart, God will grant such a man grace to serve him better and better. Him who is faithful, if he be in truth faithful, in a little, he will enable to be faithful in more. While they who break the sabbath, lose the knowledge and the fear of God, and are hurried on from one wickedness to another; they who hallow God's holy day, they who spend it reverently and devoutly, in learning his will, and in prayer and thanksgiving, will grow

in the knowledge of God, will increase in his love, and will be enabled to mount from grace to grace. Thus will their earthly sabbaths prepare and fit them for worshiping and serving him hereafter in the everlasting rest of the blessed, in the eternal sabbath of heaven.

SERMON XX.

THE GOOD OF THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE SECOND TABLE.

DEUTERONOMY vi. 24.

The Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as at this day.

IN my last two sermons I have spoken to you of the first four commandments, which make up what is commonly called the first table of the law. It is so called, because the commandments given to Moses were engraved on two tables of stone. On the first table were engraved the first four commandments, which relate to our duty toward God, —that we are to have no other gods but him only, —that we are to abstain from every kind of idol-worship,—that we are to reverence his name and his day, and to honour them, and keep them holy. These are the commandments of the first table,

which contains our duty to God. Were we all so many hermits, made to live each by himself, having no ties or dealings with other men, the first table of the law would perhaps have been sufficient; as in that case man would have owed no duties, except to God only. God however did not form men to live alone, but to live together in society. A man can hardly contrive, even if he wishes it, to withdraw himself altogether from the fellowship of his brother men. A man can hardly say to himself, "I will live quite alone." Look at the state in which we come into the world. Every man is born a member of some family. Every man is born subject to some government. Far the greater part of men are born with the necessity of betaking themselves, when they grow up, to some trade or calling for their livelihood. Even the few who can afford to live without a profession, must have estates or property of some kind to look after: and the care of that property, the business which must needs arise out of it, cannot but bring them into contact with their fellow men. Thus has God in the order of his providence united every man to his fellows by a triple tie,—by the tie of family,—by the tie of country,—and lastly, by the tie of necessity for all who are not very rich, and by the tie of interest for those who are. We are all twined together and interwoven, as it were,

into one great web or network of society, like the threads of flax, or the locks of wool, in a piece of linen or broadcloth; and this without any choice of ours. Nobody is asked whether he will be born in a cottage, or in the house of a lord. Nobody is asked whether he will be born in England, or among the savages abroad. Nobody is asked whether he chooses to come into the world to earn a livelihood by his labour, or whether he would rather enter it as the heir to a great estate. But if we do not come into the world by our own choice, nor pick out the place we are to fill in it, by whose choice and determination are we sent here, some to fill a higher station, some a lower? Plainly, my brethren, it must be by God's determination. He alone settles beforehand in what rank and station we are to be born: he no more consults us, or allows us to have a choice about the matter, than the weaver allows his wool or flax to have a choice as to what piece of cloth they shall be put into. Some are destined to coarser purposes, some to finer, but all according to the judgement of the weaver, without any choice or will of theirs. So it is with us. In weaving the great web of human life and society, the heavenly workmaster has not made it all of one quality. Some parts are finer, some coarser: and in some places the coarse threads and the fine are so wonderfully intermin-

gled and twisted together, that it would be impossible to part them without tearing the whole to pieces. In like manner will it be, if the attempt is ever made to separate the rich and poor in England. Everything which has hitherto made up the beauty and glory and strength and comfort of this nation, will be rent to tatters in the struggle, and will be as utterly destroyed, as a piece of fine cloth would be, if a man were mischievous enough to pick out and separate the Saxon wool in it from the English. Saxon or English, it is all wrought up into one cloth, and cannot now be separated: and so it is with the net-work of society. Rich and poor have all been woven up together: and an attempt to sever the one from the other, unless it be stopt in time, would end in the ruin of both.

Hitherto I have been shewing you, how we are all sent into the world, not to live by ourselves, or for ourselves, but to be connected and united with our fellowcreatures in divers ways, first as members of the same family, then as subjects of the same government, and lastly as dwellers in the same neighbourhood, where,—whether we work with our own hands, or employ others to work for us,—we are all dependent one upon another. Such is the state every man is born in: and out of that state has arisen an answering set of duties. Had we

been made to live alone, we should only have owed duty to God. But being made to live together in society, we likewise owe duties to society. We owe a duty to our family: we owe a duty to our king: we owe a duty to every one, rich or poor, with whom we may have any business or dealings of whatever kind. This second set of duties arising out of our being made to live together in society, is commonly called our duty toward our neighbour. The heads of these duties are set down in the second table of the commandments, just as the heads of our duty toward God are set down in the first table.

Nor is it to be wondered at that they are set down there,—that the heads of our duties toward our neighbours were proclaimed in the ears of the children of Israel by the voice of God himself. For so dependent are we on each other's behaviour for peace and happiness, and even for life itself, that, were a people ever to break loose from God's commandments, and throw off the restraints of laws, and to take to living every one as he pleased, following the rule of might instead of right,—there would be neither happiness, nor quiet, nor comfort,—in fact, there would be no living among such a people. You have all heard the sad story in the Gospel of the man who was possest by a legion of devils; and you may perhaps remember

how it fared with him,—that he was exceeding fierce, so that no man could pass that way for fear of him; nor could any one tame him; but day and night he wandered about far from any home, and cutting himself with stones. Now the state of a people so madly frantic as to throw off all regard to God's commandments, would not be unlike the state of this poor unhappy wretch. Like him they would be possest by a legion of evil passions and evil spirits. Like him they would be untamably wild and fierce, ready to harm and maltreat every one who came in their way. Like him they would be without a home: for how could such a blessed thing as home exist, without the safeguards of justice and purity and religion? Like him lastly, they would be for ever hurting and paining and grieving themselves and one another. All these evils came upon the unhappy wretch in the New Testament, because the devils had taken possession of him. Yet they possest only his body and his mind: for it does not appear that the demoniacs, as they are called, were wicked men; but only that they were driven mad by the power of some evil spirit. Can we doubt then that miseries, at least equal to his, would overtake a people such as I have been speaking of, a people that had thrown off all regard to God's commandments, and had given itself up

to work iniquity with greediness, and so had invited a host of devils to come and take possession of their souls? For this must follow. Man must have one master or other. He must serve some higher power. If he will not serve God, the holy and the merciful, whose wages is everlasting life, he must go into servitude to sin and Satan, whose wages is misery and death. Therefore if a man, or any number of men, throw off the yoke of God's commandments, they do not become independent thereby, whatever they may fancy. They only change one master and one yoke, for another master and another yoke. They only leave the service of God, and shake off the easy yoke of righteousness, to enter into the service of the devil, and to bend their necks under the grievous yoke of sin. Were a people to break away from God's commandments in the way I have been supposing, they would by that very act make themselves over to Satan: and so we should have a people whose very souls were possest by a legion of evil spirits. Think then, what they must suffer. Think, what passions they would be a prey to. Think, how they would be racked and tormented and torn this way and that by a thousand desires, too wild and fierce to be gratified, and which, even if they could be gratified, would yield them no contentment. Think again of the fears that would be ever

haunting them,—fears of losing everything they prized in the world. For in a country so wicked there would be no safety. No one would be able to feel safe that his house, or his wife, or his daughters, might not be taken away from him before evening. And lawful redress for such injuries there could be none among a people with whom might made right.

Such would be the state of a people living without the second table of the law of Moses, or something at least answering thereto. I do not ask you whether it would be a happy one. This is a question you can both put and answer for yourselves. You all know what alarm and distress and confusion in a neighbourhood a single murder, a single rape, a single robbery, when attended by any outrageous violence, is sure to occasion. What then must be the misery of a land, which was full of murder, of blood, of outrage, of oppression, of violence and crime of every sort! It would be a hell upon earth. And no wonder: for it would be the devil's land; and where the devil is, there must hell be also. He would make a hell even of heaven.

It was to save his people from all this manifold misery, that God gave them the commandments contained in the second table of the law, in which the chief heads of their duties to each other were

set before them in a few words. What is said in the text of all the Lord's statutes, is more especially true of these commandments, that the Lord commanded us to do them for our good. Nothing can be shorter than most of them are: and yet, so great is their wisdom and their excellence, that any country which observed even the letter of them would be free from almost every great crime; while, if any people endeavoured to keep them not in the letter only, but in the spirit,—if any people or nation were wise enough to obey them in all the length and breadth and height and depth of their full meaning,—such a people would not only be free from crime, but would enjoy a peace, a quiet, a security and tranquillity, and a degree of prosperous, undisturbed, rightful happiness, far surpassing anything which has ever been seen upon earth. The prophecy of Isaiah would be more than fulfilled among so just and righteous a people. We should see the wolf dwelling with the lamb, and the leopard lying down with the kid, and the calf with the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child leading them. That is, in such a land we should see the most perfect unity and concord, between all persons of all ranks and conditions. We should see tempers, naturally as fierce and violent as the leopard and the young lion, keeping within the rules of peaceableness and

good order. There would be no taking advantage of the weak, the innocent, or the rich, who are now as welcome a booty to the needy and reckless, as the kids and lambs and fatlings are to beasts of prey. All would live together harmoniously: and this, not from the dread of human laws,—for the government might be mild and gentle as the guidance of a little child,—but from a far worthier motive,—from the fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majesty, as the prophet has exprest it in another place. In such a land the sucking child might safely play upon the hole of the asp, and the weaned child might put its hand into the cockatrice's den. That is to say, innocence would be secured from secret fraud, as well as from open force: so that, to sum up all in the words of the same prophet, none should hurt or destroy in all that holy kingdom. Such would be the state of a people who kept all the commandments of the second table, in the fulness of their spiritual purport. There could be no evil strife of any kind among that people: for that is forbidden by the sixth commandment. There could be no lewdness or impurity; for that is forbidden by the seventh. There could be no injustice, no oppression, no over-reaching, no taking advantage of a neighbour's ignorance, or of his necessities; there could be no petty frauds or petty thefts of

any kind; for all these things are forbidden by the eighth commandment. Again, there could be no speaking untruly of our neighbour, no evil-speaking of him: talebearing, backbiting, slandering, putting a hard or unkind meaning on the actions of others,—all these things would be banished out of this land, as being contrary to the ninth commandment. Moreover covetousness and greedy desires of every kind, be it of gain, be it of honours, be it of rank, be it of praise and glory,—these too would be clean rooted out, being forbidden by the tenth commandment. Lastly, all the family virtues, all the kindly affections, all those amiable and gentle qualities, which make a man beloved, and are the honey and sugar of human life, rendering it sweet and pleasant,—these good qualities would be nursed and fostered by the spirit of the fifth commandment, and would strengthen and spread throughout the land, till the whole kingdom, however large, would be so knit together, man to man, and house to house, by affectionate feelings and friendly offices,—all the people of the country caring for each man in it, and each doing his best for the good of all,—that the nation would grow to be like one great family, joined together by brotherly kindness, and governed by a voice of love.

Such and no less than this, would be the hap-

piness of a people acting fully up to the spirit of the commandments of the second table. Therefore we ought to feel most grateful to Almighty God, for having called us to the knowledge of laws so excellent, that, if men would only keep, they would live and be happy by them. Do not tell me of human frailty, nor argue that man in a natural state is unable to do all this. For this, though true, is nothing to the present purpose. We are not in a natural state: we have been admitted into covenant with Christ: we have the promise of the Spirit, if we will ask for it in prayer. Whatever may be the case with others, we at least can keep these laws, through Christ that strengthens us. The feelings therefore, which I would have you cherish, when you think of these commandments, are thankfulness to our heavenly Father, for having given us these laws for our good, and shame, because we, his disobedient sons, have profited so little by his goodness.

I have shewn you what would be the state of a country, where the commandments were made the rule of life. Compare the picture with the present state of England; and you will see how much we lose, even in this life, by not keeping them better. Why are there so many laws in England, and so many trials, and so many gaols, and so many punishments of all kinds? Simply

because men will not keep the commandments which God has given them. If they would do so faithfully and heartily, these six commandments of the second table would stand us instead of all those acts of parliament, which shew what labour and skill are needed for man to keep his neighbour from doing wrong, and how, in spite of punishment upon punishment, new crimes are ever sprouting up. But men will not be good and happy in the way which God has pointed out to them. They will seek out bypaths of happiness for themselves, by oppression, and by cheating and robbing one neighbour of his property, another of his wife, a third of his good name. Therefore human laws are perforce called in, to frighten men, if possible, from those evil ways, which else they persist in following. Alas! is it always to be thus? Are thy commandments, O Lord, always to be made the sport of wicked and ungodly men? Hasten, we beseech thee, that time, when all the words of thy prophets shall be fulfilled, when all thy commandments shall be kept in spirit and in truth, when they shall neither hurt nor destroy in all thy holy mountain, and when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of thee, as the waters cover the sea. Amen.

SERMON XXI.

OBEDIENCE.

EPHESIANS vi. 1, 2.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honour your father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise.

IN my last sermon, I tried to shew you how great would be the misery of a people that should set the commandments at defiance, and what happiness on the other hand would attend a people that was careful to observe them in all their spiritual extent. I did this, for the sake of drawing your thoughts to the great goodness of Almighty God, in binding us over to our happiness, by commanding us to follow and keep a course, which leads straight to our good as social beings; to provide for which good is the object of the second table. As the first table shews us our duty to God, in order that God may bless us, so the second table

shews us our duty toward our neighbour, in order that we may be blessings to each other, and may lend our aid to each other's welfare, or at least may not hurt and injure one another, and may be kept from destroying or troubling the happiness which God may have given to our neighbour. So that in the commandments of the second table, God has given us the materials for a goodly building, in which we may all live together peaceably and safely. I may say, safely: because in these commandments God has given us safety,—not only for our lives, but also for the chastity of our wives, without which there can be no comfort; for our property, whether small or great; and lastly for our characters, protecting them from false swearers and evil-speakers. Whoever is protected in these four main points,—whoever is duly defended in his life, in his family, in his possessions, and in his character,—has every safeguard which laws or governors can bestow. Such is the goodly edifice which God has raised for his people, an edifice provided with safety for everything that men most love and value. The property of every one, the life of every one, the domestic comforts of every one, and the good name of every one, from the king on his throne to the labourer in his cottage, have all their special place assigned to them in this goodly edifice, or mansion of God's law.

Now what is the first story of this goodly mansion? What is the first commandment, which God laid down for the others to rise and spring from? what is the first material of social happiness which God has given to his people? The first material of all, that God prepared for us, when providing for our social happiness, the first thing he made a law about, was the obedience of children to their parents. The commandment which ordains that children should honour their father and mother, holds the first place in the second table. It comes even before that commandment which protects our lives by forbidding murder. The dutiful obedience of children then is thus declared by God to be the foundation of all social happiness, and of every social virtue. It is the first and chief thing to be looked to, as being the likeliest root for the others to grow from. Therefore did God place the fifth commandment at the head of the second table: to teach us that this duty is the head and source of all the other social duties.

The behaviour of a child to its parents then is no such trifle as too many perverse children, and too many foolish parents, are prone to fancy it. How often do we hear mothers saying, "It is only the poor child's way; it is a little pettish and fractious at times: but it means no harm by it. To

be sure it does not mind me quite so well as it ought to do; but children will be children." So the child goes on uncorrected, and grows up disobedient and undutiful. That is, he grows up with habits and dispositions of heart and mind so evil, that God has classed them with the very worst crimes, with false swearing, and theft, and adultery, and even with murder. If undutifulness in children had been a mere trifle, would God have put it into this black list? We may be certain therefore, that there is more evil in it than meets the eye. Either it must be worse in itself, or it must be more dangerous, or more mischievous, than we suspect: or at least the contrary virtue, the virtue of obedience, must be more excellent and important. Indeed it requires no very deep search into the matter, to find two prime qualities in this duty of children to obey their parents,—first, the reasonableness and justice of the thing in itself, and secondly, its use in forming the character of the child. These, if I mistake not, are two of the qualities which make obedience to parents of so much value and importance, that God has even vouchsafed to win us to it by marking it with a peculiar blessing.

As to the reasonableness and justice of this duty, can any one doubt it, who thinks what a child is? Look at a baby, and see what a poor helpless

thing it is. Consider how entirely it depends on its parents for food and warmth and clothing, and indeed for every thing. It could not live a day, but for their care and kindness. Think of the trouble and anxiety, the careful days and wakeful nights, which an infant costs its mother by its sicknesses. There is all the rearing of them, especially when they are delicate. What plant from the Indies is so difficult to rear, or needs such constant care and watching, as a delicate sickly child? Think of the wear and tear in the mother's heart,—I have often seen it,—during that rearing. It is not the child-bearing, so much as the child-rearing,—it is the watching the cradle with patient eye day after day for hours together,—it is the care and fear and anxiety and weariness while nursing children through their illnesses, that drive the colour from the mother's cheek, and make it pale and wan before its time. Children! children! what do you owe to your mothers, whose hearts you have thus sorely tried, and who have sacrificed so much of their strength for you, that you might live and grow up and be strong! It is true, we can none of us remember the pains and anxiety, which we must all have cost our mothers in our infancy. But we may give a good guess, by observing the care and pains they bestow on our younger brothers and sisters. Whatever pains and

anxieties these may cost our mother, we may be sure that we in our infancy must have cost her nearly the same. Therefore I would have every one of you, boys and girls, that now hear me, when you see your mothers nursing a baby, and watching over it,—I would have you say to yourselves: "So must she have nursed me; so must she have watched over me: I must have needed all this looking after: I must have put her to all this trouble: I must have been treated with all this tenderness." If you would think in this way of what your mothers must have done for you, you could not help feeling what a debt of thankfulness and love you owe them. It is the only return you can make to your parents, for all they have done for you during your infancy, for all that they are still doing and feeling for you during your childhood, yea, and for years after. For a mother's heart is not like the heart of an animal, which, when its young have ceased to suck, drops them out of its memory. The human heart is of more lasting stuff. The impressions which God makes, when he writes on it with the pen of nature, if the heart is of the right kind, last for ever. The mother, the good mother at least, will go on caring for her children long, long after they have become men and women. Let them be men and women to others; to her they will always be chil-

dren. When her sons and daughters marry, you will see her grow young again for joy: and she will take to nursing and loving and looking after their children, almost as if they were her own. So strong and lasting is a mother's love, that, while other animals drive their young away, as soon as they can feed themselves, the love of human parents descends and prolongs itself even to their offspring's offspring.

But this is only the outward and visible sign, and is next to nothing when compared to the inward feelings. Their fears, their wishes, their prayers for your souls' welfare, their eagerness to mark every hopeful sign of godliness and goodness in you,—the delight they take in thinking and speaking of every little token of kindness and affection that you may shew them,—these are the true and touching proofs how imperishable a mother's love is; and in return for that love, so long as they are in this world, you will owe them, and should rejoice to pay them, a still increasing debt of duty and gratitude and affection. For this is the only payment they ask for, in return for all their tenderness and care and anxiety in watching over you. They only want love for love; a love of course suitable to the difference which God has placed between you. For you must never forget that you are the child, and she the parent: you received

life from her, and she gave life to you, and carried you in her arms, and fed you from her own breasts. Therefore your love must be not love merely, but dutiful love, such as it befits a child to cherish for its parent, a love shewing itself in acts of gentleness and respect and kindness, and above all, till you are quite grown up, in the strictest and readiest obedience.

I have spoken only of the debt which children owe to their mother: but you will easily understand that there must be a like debt owing to the father also. The commandment says, "Honour thy father and thy mother," putting the father first. For he is the head of his family; he supports it by his labour; he rules the house: therefore to him, as the master and the head, who provides for and supplies the wants of all, the fullest love and respect and obedience are plainly due.

Children, you see, are not only bound to love their parents, but likewise to obey them, and that, not from constraint, nor from the fear of blows, but readily and willingly and cheerfully. The obedience paid for the fear of stripes is the obedience of a mule, not of a son. What I should desire to see paid to parents throughout he land, is that perfect, that entire and willing obedience, which belongs to christian sons, that is, to sons who take Jesus for their example. Even he, the

Son of God, the King of glory, the Saviour of the world, was subject during his childhood and youth to his earthly parents. Surely then it must be right and fitting for earthly children to obey theirs. I am aware, this strict and ready obedience, which does everything it is bid, as soon as it is bid, without asking why or wherefore,—this unquestioning obedience, I am aware, is rather out of date. But God's words are still true, and God's commandments are still good and reasonable, whatever the world, which is at enmity with God, may think or say. For look at the mind of a child, and see whether that, as well as its body, is not poor and weak and helpless. What does a child know? What can a child know, save what its parents teach it? Its parents for a time stand in the place of God to it; as such, it must believe them and obey them, and not only during the years of early childhood, but long after. For, as the baby is ignorant of what belongs to babyhood, so is the boy ignorant of what belongs to boyhood, and the youth too is ignorant of what belongs to his age. There is the same difference between a father and son, a mother and daughter, as between a person who knows a road, and one who does not. If any of you wanted to walk across the country to Salisbury, you would not think of starting till you had spoken with a friend who had gone the way

before. If that friend told you to avoid a particular spot, where the river had overflowed its banks, and, instead of following the vale, to strike up the hill, where the path, though a little rougher, was drier and shorter and better, you would mind what he said, and follow his directions. Now is not the road of life more difficult to find out than the road to Salisbury? and is not the heart of a parent more anxious for your welfare, than a common wayfaring acquaintance, that you should hesitate to listen to the advice your parents give you when starting on the journey of life? "Hear, ye children, (says Solomon,) the instruction of a father; for I give you good doctrine:" and again, "Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings, for I have taught thee in the way of wisdom: I have led thee in right paths. When thou runnest thou shalt not stumble" (Prov. iv. 1. 10). Solomon stored up the treasures of his wisdom for the good of his son Rehoboam. But that son did, like too many sons now-a-days: he shut his ears against his father's advice, and cast off his father's old experienced counsellors, and listened to the young men who had grown up with him, and who were no wiser than himself. The Book of Kings tells us the consequence: Rehoboam lost ten out of the twelve tribes; and the kingdom of Israel was rent from that of Judah, never to be reunited to it even

to this day. Your parents indeed have not the wisdom of Solomon; nor does the fate of a kingdom depend on your obeying them: but they have your welfare at heart: and they have that experience in the ways of life, which you want. You may be the better for their experience; you may profit by their warnings; you may learn from their lessons. All these advantages a child throws away, that does not listen to his parents.

But even if the benefits of obedience were less plain, it must be always wise and reasonable to do what God has commanded us. And it is expressly written in the Bible: "Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well-pleasing to the Lord" (Col. iii. 20). This blessing too is pronounced in Jeremiah upon the Rechabites: "Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according to all that he hath commanded you; therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts: Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever" (Jer. xxxv. 18, 19).

Thus far I have tried to shew you how just and reasonable it is that children should honour and obey their parents. But there is another very important view of the matter yet behind. I mean, the use and benefit to the child itself, of training it up from infancy to regular and prompt obedi-

ence. This is a matter which concerns the parents quite as much as the child. For if it be of great advantage to a child to be trained up in habits of obedience, it becomes the duty of every parent to train up a child in such habits.

Now what in my mind gives this duty its chief title to be considered the source and wellspring of so many others, is, that, to fulfill it, a child must be brought up, from the moment it can understand anything, to obey its parents readily and cheerfully, without any of those loitering steps and angry tears and sullen looks, which one too often sees in children; but which no good and thinking man can witness without sorrow: so clearly does such backwardness and sullenness prove that there is an evil root in the heart of the child, which, if it be not closely watched, will assuredly bring forth fruits of stubbornness and disobedience. And what fruits can be worse? Hear what the Scripture says of them: "Rebellion and disobedience is like the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is like idolatry." That is to say, stubbornness and disobedience are so bad in God's sight, that no sins can well be worse. It is true, the disobedience and stubbornness condemned in this passage are against God, not against man. But, as St John reasons about love, that, if a man love not his brother whom he has seen, he cannot love God whom

he has not seen; so may we also reason about obedience, that, if a child does not learn to obey its earthly parents, neither will it obey its heavenly Father. It is in the school of home, amid the little hardships and restraints and crosses and disappointments which every child must needs meet with, that the great lesson of obedience is best learnt: as it is written even of Christ himself; "Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. v. 8). Now in no place is this obedience, which we have all such great need to learn somewhere, to be learnt so easily and with so little suffering, as in our father's house, in childhood. For then we have no habits to unlearn. The obstinacy and perverseness of our natures are still in the bud. They have not blossomed and seeded. They have not yet grown hard and tough with age. They have not struck their crooked roots deep into every corner of the heart, nor twisted them, as they are sure to do in later life, when suffered to grow unchecked, round every violent passion and evil disposition, strengthening them, and strengthened by them. These things, which make the cure of obstinacy and perverseness so difficult in a grown-up person, in a child do not yet exist. Therefore, as it is easier to draw the tooth of a child than of a grown-up person, because their teeth have no fangs, and ours have;

so is it easier to break and cut down that perverseness and obstinacy which we are all born with, in a child than in a grown-up person; and for the very same reason: because their perverseness has had no time to strike its fangs into their heart.

The sum of the matter is this. There is a root of self-will born in every man; and it is one of the worst parts of that corrupt nature which we have all inherited from Adam. But this is not the worst: for out of this root of self-will grow two evil and misshapen stems. One of these stems is pride; the other stem is disobedience. This is our state by nature. We have all a natural dislike to be ruled or counseled, even to our own good. We have all a stem of pride, and a stem of disobedience, growing out of that evil root of self-will, which we all brought with us into the world, and which is our portion of the stock of Adam. Now if these stems were allowed to shoot up and grow, until pride had overshadowed and darkened our mind, and disobedience had filled our hearts, what room would be left for godliness and righteousness? Would not the heart and mind and soul be full of qualities the most opposite and hostile to the heavenly graces which Christ requires from all such as love him and believe in him? Christ requires us to have no will of our own, and to make the will of God our only rule

of action. What hope is there that this will be done by any one who has accustomed himself to make his own will his idol? Christ requires us to be humble-minded. How hard a lesson is this for a man whose mind is filled with pride! Christ requires us to be obedient. But how can any one become so, who has grown up a child of disobedience? You may as well expect water to burn, and fire to wet,—you may as well expect a barren common, that has never been ploughed and sown, to produce a crop of good wheat,—as that a child, which has gone on year after year in pride and self-will and disobedience to its parents, will readily or easily tear off its habits and its nature, to walk humbly and obediently before God. The thing is not to be imagined. Therefore what does Solomon say? "Train up a child in the way he should go." Train him up in obedience to his parents, while a child, in order that he may be less unwilling to obey our heavenly Father, when he becomes a man. "It is good for a man (says the prophet Jeremiah) that he bear the yoke in his youth" (Lam. iii. 27). But what yoke? First, the yoke of obedience; secondly, the yoke of self-denial; thirdly, the yoke of the cross, which is the sign and token of humility. This is the triple yoke, which it behoves children to bear. A child cannot be taught too early to be obedient and hum-

ble and self-denying. We must cultivate obedience in him, a goodly plant, that it may outgrow and overtop and stifle the evil stem of disobedience. We must cultivate humility in him, another goodly plant, in the hope that it may outgrow and overtop and stifle, or at least keep under, the evil stem of pride. Lastly, we must train and accustom him to habits of steady self-denial, which our Lord has recommended to us as the best of yokes for our headstrong and else unmanageable self-will. Pampering and indulging the will is like giving strong meats to a man in a raging fever. It is adding fuel to the fire. Stubbornness is an enemy that must be starved out. We cannot drive him out of the fortress of our souls, except by prayer, which brings us the help of the Holy Spirit, and by fasting, or self denial, which starves and weakens and mortifies or kills the will.

From what has been said it is easy to perceive the excellence of the fifth commandment toward forming the character of a child, and training it up to go in that way which God desires to see us all walk in,—the way of humility, of self-denial, and of obedience. These three are very closely joined together. A man can scarcely be humble and self-denying, without being likewise obedient. On the other hand, though a man may be kept from this or that crime by the dread of punishment,

by shame, by the fear of consequences, by want of inclination,—though a man may be kept by motives of this sort from committing great crimes, and even from indulging in gross sins,—he will never be obedient to the whole law of love, without being at the same time humble and self-denying. It is so even in earthly love: and this is the great blessing of earthly love, that it is a school of self-denial. There will ever be some pleasure to sacrifice, some interest to give up, some affront or slight to overlook: and how is a man to do these things, who has not learnt to practise self-denial? So that these three principles are very closely linked together. The principle of humility, which teaches us to esteem and honour others above ourselves; the principle of self-denial, which weans us from the pleasures and the treasures, the toys and joys of this world, and leads us cheerfully to forgo any of them, if it comes into competition with our duty; and the principle of strict obedience to every commandment of God, —and for his sake likewise to every lawful commandment of those men who have a claim and title to our obedience; as our parents in the first place, then our schoolmasters and teachers, the king, and all who are in authority under him, our masters, if we happen to be servants, and our superiors of every degree.

For this humility, this self-denial, and this obedience, what school can be so excellent as a family where the fifth commandment is duly kept? Think of these words, Honour thy father and thy mother: and see how very much they contain. It is not the mere outward act of obedience that is here required from us,—it is honour,—a large word, embracing many particulars of duty, inward respect, outward reverence, and every kind of real service. So that children are called upon by this fifth commandment, not only to shew their parents the highest respect outwardly, but also to cherish the feelings of grateful love and reverence for them inwardly. Yes, children, you must obey your parents; you must wait upon them, when you grow old enough: you must perform such services for them as they may stand in need of; you must assist them in all things to the utmost of your power. In old age and sickness you must do your best to make them comfortable, not grumbling at the task, not thinking it wearisome, but rather rejoicing that you have an opportunity of shewing your gratitude to your parents, by nursing and taking care of them in their old age, in return for all the care and nursing which you received from them in your infancy. This, and nothing short of this, is honouring your father and your mother.

Now how much humility and self-denial, as well

as how much obedience, must be learnt in the practice of these things! They cannot be done by a proud, disobedient, stubborn child, who is not ready to give up its own wishes to the wishes and directions of its parents. Thus the fifth commandment is a kind of practical school, where the child, in obeying its parents, learns to obey all to whom it owes obedience. In giving up its little fancies to please its parents, it learns the duty of sacrificing self to others. And what lessons can be more necessary? or when are these lessons likely to be learnt, if they are not learnt in childhood? So that this commandment is twofold. While it speaks directly to children, and shews them how they are to behave toward their parents, it also teaches parents how and in what spirit they are to bring up their children. Children, honour your parents, and obey them in all things; for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. Parents, bring up your children to honour and obey you: teach them to honour and obey you in God's stead. So, when they pass from under your wing, may they, who have been obedient to their earthly, become obedient to their heavenly Father.

SERMON XXII.

LOVE, THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW.

ROMANS xiii. 8—10.

He that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law. For this,—Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment,—it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

THE foundations of that goodly edifice of law and duty, which the commandments, when put together, form, having been already treated of in my former sermons; I shall now proceed briefly to examine the upper parts of the building. You have had your duty to God set before you. You have been taught that covetousness is a worship of Mammon,

that lust is a worship of Belial, that malice and revenge is a worship of Moloch, and that consequently they who indulge these, or indeed any other evil desires and evil passions, sacrifice, as St Paul expresses it, to devils. So that these three mother vices, hatred, sensuality, and covetousness, are all clean contrary to that first and great commandment, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me." Here then is one great foundation laid for the edifice of law and duty, which I will call the foundation of piety. But further, what you owe to your parents has likewise been set before you: and in speaking on that point, so much was said about the great evil and danger of self-will and pride and disobedience, and the opposite graces of self-denial and humility and obedience were so urged on your minds, that here another great foundation was also laid, which I will call the foundation of self-abasement.

Now these two foundations are not only broad and deep enough to support the whole weight of our duty both to God and man; they are also capable of furnishing a great part of the materials for the building. For just as the builder, who would build solidly, must build the whole of goodly stone, hewing the materials for his foundation and for his superstructure out of the same quarry, so is it in religion. Here too, after self-

abasement has sunk the ground deep, and piety has laid its foundations solidly,—here too, after the man has been emptied of his wilful self, and filled with the will of God instead,—the same principles of godliness and self-denial are requisite to carry up the building heavenward. Without godliness to carry it on, the building is like to come to a stand: without straight and strict and severe lines of self-denial and humility, to keep every act and thought in its place, the building will be sure to bilge somewhere. The walls will have their weak side; a skilful eye will discover a swelling out in it, like a breach ready to fall; and sooner or later it will come down. So important are the two principles of godliness and self-abasement, not to the foundations merely, but likewise to the whole edifice of duty.

Well, then, supposing these principles laid in and provided for you, what more is wanting to complete the edifice? Only the cement of love. Therefore, instead of taking you through the last five commandments, one by one, I have chosen a text from St Paul, which classes all the five together, and declares them to be all included under the universal law of love. "He that loveth another (says that apostle) hath fulfilled the law. For this,—Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not

bear false witness, thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment,—it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Thus far what the apostle says must be plain and clear to all. No man can have any difficulty in understanding, that, if we love a man, we shall not try to kill him, nor to draw the affections of his wife from him, nor to rob him, nor to tell lies of him, nor to do him any other injury. So far all is clear. But St Paul goes a step further. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Love is the fulfilling of the law: what does that mean? To fulfill a thing is to fill it full, so that no part of it is left void or empty. Thus we pray in the Communion Service, that all who have partaken of that holy communion,—all, that is, who have partaken of the body and blood of their Saviour Christ, spiritually set before them in that holy sacrament,—may be fulfilled, or fully filled, with God's grace and benediction. We pray that they may be brimfull of grace and blessings, so that no part of them may be left empty of grace, no part of them unguarded and unhallowed by the Spirit of our Lord and Saviour. This is the meaning of fulfilling. It is an image taken from a cup filled as full as it can hold; and it is applied, both in Scripture and in the language of

common life, to a great number of things. In the book of Exodus we read, that Pharaoh's task-masters required the children of Israel, after the straw had been taken from them, to fulfill their daily task in making bricks as before: that is, they were required to give in fully as many bricks as they had been accustomed to make during the time when straw was given to them. The tale, or quantity, of bricks demanded of them was not to be diminished. In the same way, to fulfill a promise is to keep it fully and completely: and so to fulfill a duty is to discharge it fully and completely, leaving no part of it neglected or unperformed.

After this, we shall have no difficulty in perceiving how much St Paul means by fulfilling the law. He means that we should do everything it requires of us to the very utmost. We are punctually and exactly to give in every single one of the tale of bricks, or rather of the fine hewn stones, which God demands from us toward building up the edifice of duty. We are not to break, or to neglect, or to overlook any part of any one of the commandments, under the pretense that it is a little one, that it is a trifle, that it cannot signify, that there is no good in being too particular,—remembering the words of Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount, that whosoever shall break the very least of these commandments, shall be called the

least in the kingdom of heaven. That is to say, he shall be considered a most unworthy member of Christ's kingdom even here, and therefore, I need not add, can have no chance of being admitted into Christ's glorious and everlasting kingdom hereafter.

Now it is well worth our notice, that, when Jesus uttered this awful threat against any one who presumed to break any one of God's commandments, even in the least tittle, he was speaking of the very point, which St Paul speaks of in the text. He was speaking, as his great ambassador and messenger to the Gentiles, the apostle Paul, spoke afterward, of fulfilling the law. "Think not, (these are his words,) think not I am come to destroy the law. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. Whosoever therefore, (I pray you, mark this word, *therefore*,) shall break one of these least commandments, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 17—20). As if he had said, "I am come to fulfill the law of Moses: I am come to shew you the exceeding depth of God's commandments: I am come to shew you how much they require of every one, when they are taken in their full meaning. This

is one great object of my coming. Therefore, if any person fancies I am come to bring men a license for sinning,—if any one conceives he may continue in sin, because I have brought grace and pardon into the world,—he quite mistakes the purpose of my coming. The Father sent me, not to abolish holiness, nor to diminish aught from it, but to set it upon a stronger foundation, and to give it its just limits; so that it shall embrace, not only the outward actions of men, but their very thoughts and wishes. I am come to fulfill the law, not to make it void. Nay, so far am I from intending to weaken it in any one point, or to take aught from it, that on the contrary I require a much more perfect service from my disciples than has hitherto been deemed necessary. The righteousness which you admire so much in the scribes and Pharisees, is not enough to satisfy me. Except your righteousness exceed theirs, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."

It seems to follow from what has been said, that the fulfilling of the law spoken of in the text is keeping it in its fullest, its deepest, its most spiritual meaning. And what is that? What is the full breadth and length and depth of the sixth commandment, and of the seventh, and of the eighth, and of the ninth? How much do they contain? So far as the sixth and seventh are con-

cerned, the question need not trouble us: since our Saviour himself has pointed out how much these two commandments require from us, in order to their true fulfilment. And though he confined himself to the two commandments against murder and adultery, yet, by observing the principles he laid down concerning them, and by applying the same principles to the commandments against theft, and false witness, and coveting, we shall have no difficulty in making out how these commandments also should be fulfilled.

To begin then with the sixth and seventh: our Saviour, after giving his disciples to understand that the narrow view which the scribes and Pharisees had been wont to take of their duty, in their shallow righteousness, must now be enlarged and widened, proceeds as follows: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgement: but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgement; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust

after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. v. 21, 22, 27, 28). Now, without entering into a detailed examination of these words, thus much is clear at first sight, that in them our Saviour extends the prohibition against murder from the hand to the heart, forbidding, not merely the act of murder, and therewith every kind of lesser violence against our neighbours persons, but also all reproachful and insolent language: nay, even the feeling of causeless anger is declared to be contrary to the commandment. In the same way he forbids us, not merely to commit adultery, or any other act of uncleanness, but even to look upon a woman with a wanton eye. In both cases he forbids, not merely the gross outward act of sin, but the very least approach to it, even in word or gesture, even in wish or thought.

It is easy to extend the same principle to the eighth and ninth commandments. It is easy to see that our Saviour, had he spoken of them, would have told us to keep our hands from picking, as well as from stealing. He would have forbidden, not only great thefts, but small thefts; not only open robbery, but secret robbery, not only those greater frauds which human judges punish, but all that cheating, of whatsoever kind, which the laws of man cannot reach. All extortion, according to

this rule, comes under the eighth commandment. So does the taking advantage of a neighbour's ignorance, or of his necessities, to drive a hard bargain with him. So do all those things which too many reckon fair,—such as cheating the king's revenue, smuggling and buying of smugglers, poaching and buying of poachers:—all these are breaches of the eighth commandment. So too the neglecting to pay our debts, and even the running into debt beyond what we are quite sure of being able to pay, is a plain breach of the eighth commandment: because, if I get goods from a tradesman, and do not pay him for them, I cheat and defraud him of his goods, just as much as if I carried them off by stealth.

The transition from stealing to lying, from theft to falsehood, is but too natural and easy. It is not difficult to perceive that our Saviour, had he spoken of the ninth commandment, would have given that too a like breadth and depth of meaning. He would doubtless have told us not to lie at all, but to speak truth in all sincerity every one to his neighbour. He would have taught us that not only false witnessing in a court of justice is forbidden by the ninth commandment, but that every uncharitable, every harsh, every ill-natured word, every bad construction which we put upon a neighbour's conduct, every evil motive we impute

to him, nay, every unkind and suspicious thought which we suffer ourselves to entertain of him, is bearing false witness against him.

Of the tenth commandment, it may suffice to say that our Saviour, without expressly speaking of it, has nevertheless shewn us how we ought to understand it, in those many passages of his Sermon, where be exhorts us to be poor in spirit, to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, and not on earth, and to dismiss all anxiety about the morrow. If we act on the principle of these heavenly precepts, we shall not only abstain from coveting what belongs to our neighbour, but we shall never covet or vehemently desire anything this earth can give.

Thus it appears that every angry feeling, every wanton thought, every uncharitable and suspicious thought, every unfair advantage and dishonest trick, however it may be allowed to pass free by human laws, and however customary in men's dealings with each other,—all these, and all manner of greediness after the things of this world, are breaches of one or other of the commandments. Nothing short of perfect kindness, perfect purity, perfect honesty, perfect truth, and perfect temperance, will fulfill the law. Nothing short of perfect kindness; because every degree of unkindness is forbidden by the sixth commandment:

nothing short of perfect purity; because all impurity is forbidden by the seventh: nothing short of perfect honesty; because every kind of dishonesty is forbidden by the eighth: nothing short of perfect truth; because all falsehood is condemned by the ninth: nothing short of perfect temperance; because all greediness and covetous desires are forbidden by the tenth commandment.

Such are the vast claims which God's law has upon us, when taken in its full extent. Now let me ask you, for claims like these who can give a receipt in full? who can satisfy them? who can hope to satisfy them in any degree? St Paul tells us,—not indeed how to discharge the debt, so as to be quit of it; for it cannot be discharged: it is perpetually growing: therefore, when he says, "owe no man anything," he brings in that remarkable exception, "but to love one another:" as if he had said, the debt of love is one which a Christian must owe for ever. But though this debt is one which cannot be paid off altogether, St Paul shews us how we may go on making continual payments toward it, by loving our neighbour as ourselves. Love is the fulfilling of the law. If we had perfect love for our neighbour, we should keep these commandments perfectly: and in proportion as love fills us, in the same proportion

shall we fulfill them. Love then will enable us to keep the commandments: nothing else will,—no worldly fear, no regard for reputation, not even a sense of duty, unenlightened by the spirit of love. These motives may indeed raise us to the level of the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees: but they are not strong enough to lift us up to that height of righteousness, which Jesus Christ requires from his disciples.

The reason of this is plain. We have a bias in our nature. Therefore so long as we attempt to bowl straight at the mark, without making allowance for that bias, so long we shall be sure to miss it. The bias I speak of is self-love, which we must take care to allow for, and, as it were, to balance with christian love. That there is such a bias in our nature is plain. Else why should we all be such unfair judges in our own case, and, comparatively speaking, such fair judges in matters we are not concerned in? Any man of common sense can see the rights of a case, where the question is between neighbour and neighbour. Not one in ten, nor in fifty, nor in a hundred, can see the right of the case when the question is between his neighbour and himself. Is not this a plain proof that, in weighing the merits of his own case, he does not use the same scales and weights, as he would do in any other? Where self is concerned,

the weight of self-love is sure to slip into one of the scales: and so they become uneven. Nor is this to be remedied, except by putting that love of our neighbour into the opposite scale, which Christ, and St Paul after him, commands us to cherish: for this being such a love as we bear to ourselves, by weighing the one against the other, the balance will be righted, and the scales will become true again . . . alas! I cannot say that: for who *does* love his neighbour as fully, as sincerely, and as universally as he loves himself? But in the same proportion in which we do arrive at this perfect love, in the same proportion as we can call up a weight of love to our neighbour in our hearts, to counterbalance our natural selfishness, in the same proportion shall we be fitted for fulfilling the law.

It only remains for us to consider how we are to obtain this love. St Paul in another place tells us that too. The fruit of the Spirit, he says, is love. But of what spirit? Why, of the Spirit of Christ: as it is written, "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, to redeem them that were under the law, that ye might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 4—6). By the coming of our

Saviour Christ we have been adopted into God's family; and as an earnest of his favour, and to enable us to serve him with the hearts of sons, God has given us the Spirit of Christ, of which Spirit the fruit is love. This is the golden chain and succession and inheritance of blessings: forgiveness, adoption, favour, the Spirit, the fruits of the Spirit, the fulfilling of the law. And all this succession and inheritance comes to us as coheirs with Christ.

You see, brethren, how much cause you have to be joyful for Christ's coming, seeing he has brought you such heavenly gifts. He has opened your eyes to see the breadth and depth of God's commandments. He has given you the spirit of love, by which alone it is possible to fulfill them. He has reconciled you to God, that you may love God, and has given you the Spirit, that you may serve him. What remains then, but that, as you have been taught the way of God's commandments, so you should strive to walk therein, perfecting holiness in the spirit of love? Love, you see, is of heavenly growth. Cultivate the plant then; nourish it; watch over it; pray for the Holy Spirit to nourish it; and strengthen it in your hearts: and its blossom shall be peace in this life, and its fruit everlasting joy.

SERMON XXIII.

ANSWERABLE, AND NOT ANSWERABLE;

OR,

WHAT IS CONFIRMATION?

GALATIANS vi. 5.

Every man shall bear his own burthen.

SEVERAL of you are going ere long with God's grace before the bishop to be confirmed. I will therefore take this opportunity of saying a few words to you about confirmation. I shall divide what I have to say into two parts. First I shall tell you what confirmation is not; and next I shall tell you what confirmation is.

First then, as to what confirmation is not: it is not, what some appear to fancy it, a taking of our sins on our own shoulders. There is, I believe, a notion held by many persons, that a child's godfathers and godmothers are answerable for its

offenses, until it has been to the bishop; after which it is bound to answer for them itself. This, or something like it, is not an uncommon notion: but it is a very mistaken one. There is no being answerable, in the sense in which the word is here understood, for the sins of another. Every one who has a burthen to bear, must bear his own burthen. Every one who has sins to answer for, must answer for his own sins. The moment a child gets to know right from wrong,—and children begin to acquire that knowledge at a very early age indeed,—that moment does it likewise begin to be answerable before God for what it does. So long as the child did not know right from wrong, so long it was incapable of sinning: for sin consists in doing what we know, or at least ought to know, to be wrong. But when the child has learnt that there is a difference between right and wrong, it has already begun to be a reasonable creature; it has already begun to be answerable for its sins; it has already set out on its journey either toward heaven or toward hell.

Wonder not that I speak thus to you of children. It is the neglecting to consider them in this serious light,—it is the habit of saying, when a child does wrong, "O, what does it signify! it is only a child;"—it is the forgetting the trust which God puts into the hands of parents, when he gives them

children,—that occasions half the vice and wickedness in the world. While the foolish parent is saying, "It is only a child,"—the seeds of evil are taking root and spreading; sinful habits are forming,—habits of lying perhaps, or habits of sulkiness, or habits of greediness, or habits of anger: and so the child grows up uncorrected and unchecked, into a stubborn lawless boy, or into a bold bad girl, a grief and shame to its father and mother.

Now are we to believe that, for all this stubbornness and naughtiness of all kinds, the boy and girl are not answerable, because the bishop has not laid his hand on their head, and said a prayer over them? That can never be. Verily they must each bear his own burthen. The boy must be prepared to bear the burthen of his sins against God, —the girl must be prepared to bear the burthen of her sins against God,—whether they go to be confirmed or not. I say *sins:* because there is no child,—none at least that we can have to do with, —but has been taught the outlines and elements of its duty. Every child knows that it ought to speak the truth: every child knows that it is wicked not to speak the truth. When a child therefore, after knowing this, tells a lie, it sins a wilful sin against God. What I have said of lying, applies equally to pilfering, to sulkiness, to disobedience,

to the being in a passion, to a child's neglecting its lessons, to its not saying its prayers, in a word, to every breach of that which it knows to be its duty. They are all sins.

Is it not foolishness then to imagine that the godfathers and godmothers, when they bring a child to church, undertake to bear the punishment of all these sins, until the child is old enough to be confirmed? No man living, no man that ever lived, can bear the burthen of another man's offenses, excepting only the man Christ Jesus. He indeed, in the words of the prophet Isaiah, did bear the sins of many, yea, even of the whole world: "he was wounded for the transgressions of mankind, and was bruised for their offenses: and on him was laid the iniquity of us all." But this, which is true of the man Christ Jesus, because, being God as well as man, he came on purpose to take on himself the punishment due to our sins, and so to reconcile us to the Father, neither is, nor can be true of any other man that ever lived. Much less can it be true of every godfather and godmother. In sooth they have all more need to cast their own burthens upon Christ, than to volunteer taking upon themselves the additional burthen of their godchild. The thing is impossible: and the notion of their doing so is altogether a mistake. Read through the service of baptism:

look more especially at the questions which are asked of the godfathers and godmothers, and the answers they are required to make; and from beginning to end you will not find a single word about their bearing the child's sins.

There is indeed one sense, and that a very important one, in which a child's godfather and godmother, and its teachers, and above all, its parents, may all be said to be answerable for its sins: and that is, when they do not teach it better,—when they do not try to check every mark of evil that they see in it, mildly indeed and gently, but firmly and effectually,—when they neglect any opportunity of turning its heart and thoughts toward God. I spoke just now of the trust that God puts into your hands when he gives you children. And can any trust be greater, than that of an innocent and immortal soul, entrusted to its parents in order that they may bring it up from its infancy to fear and love and serve God for ever and ever?

This is the true light to look at children in. They are heirs of immortality: they are candidates for heaven. If parents only thought of them in this way, how carefully would they watch over them! how warmly and heartily would they pray for them! how anxious would they be to talk to them about the great and merciful things that

Christ has done and suffered for their souls! These things are not above the comprehension of a child, if told plainly and simply. A very young child may be brought to understand that it was very good of Christ to come down from heaven, where he was living gloriously and happily, for the sake of teaching us and doing us good. A very young child may be brought to understand that it was very good of Christ to suffer pain and death for our sakes, to make us happy. A very young child will be ready to feel that it ought to love and obey Christ for all this goodness. These things are the essence and foundation of Christianity; and when set before a child simply and affectionately, they are the very things to go to its heart. For it happens still, as in our Saviour's time, that these truths, though hidden from many who in this world are wise and prudent, are yet within the reach of babes.

Well then! if a child can be made to understand these things,—if a child can be brought to feel these things,—if a child can be taught to love and obey Christ, to fear God, to lift up its little hands in prayer,—it is the first duty, and ought to be the greatest pleasure of parents to teach their children all these good things. And what excuse can there be for the father and mother who fail to do so? Verily that father and that mother are guilty before

God,—guilty of having neglected to do what they were bound to do, for the sake of saving their child from sin and death,—guilty of having starved its soul, by keeping it without the words of everlasting life. Therefore, though it is most certain that every child must bear the burthen of its own wilful sins, it is equally certain that those parents who have failed to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, are answerable to God for their neglect; and the burthen of it will fall on them. So that to such careless parents, and to their ill-taught wicked children, we may apply the awful words of the prophet Ezekiel (iii. 18): "When I say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die,—and thou givest him no warning, nor speakest to warn him from his wicked way, to save his life, he shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand." The wicked children shall die in their iniquity: but God will require their blood at the hands of their neglectful parents,—of their parents who are guilty of their blood, shall I say? ah no! worse, far worse! who by their wicked negligence are guilty of their children's everlasting death. Can such guilt be light in God's eyes? No guilt can be light, by which souls are lost to heaven, and led to the brink of hell. Avoid it then, I entreat you, all ye parents, by training up your sons and daughters

in the way they should go, by fulfilling the trust which God has committed to you, by caring as much, and doing as much for the souls of your children, as you care and do for their bodies.

What I have been saying of natural fathers and mothers, applies in a degree to godfathers and godmothers. They too have a sacred trust, a trust which they are the more bound to fulfill, because they have undertaken it of their own accord. No one can force you or me to come to church and stand godfather to this or that child. The act, when we do so, is altogether voluntary. Therefore, after taking the duty on ourselves by our own free choice, we are surely bound to fulfill it faithfully. Now what is that duty? The Prayerbook tells us in the following words, which are addrest to the godfathers and godmothers at the end of the baptismal service: "Forasmuch as the child has promised by you, his sureties, to renounce the devil and all his works, to believe in God, and to serve him, you must remember, that it is your part and duty to see that he be taught, as soon as he is able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession he has here made by you. And you are to provide, or, to take care, that he may be brought up virtuously, to lead a godly and christian life." Such is the duty of a godfather and godmother: such, and no other, the burthen they really take

upon themselves. They are not answerable for the sins of their godchild: but they are answerable before God and man, for doing their best to have their godchild properly taught his duty, and brought up to lead a christian and godly life.

But perhaps you will tell me, that, in the present state of things, no godfather is able to see to this, however he may wish it: and undoubtedly there is some truth in such an objection. For no godfather is entitled to go uncalled for into his neighbour's house, and interfere with him in the bringing up of his child. This is certainly true. On the other hand, no one need be a godfather, unless he pleases: and no one ought to stand godfather to a child, unless he has reason to believe, from what he knows of its parents, that it will be brought up in a godly manner, or unless he is prepared, in case the parents are neglectful, to take its religious instruction upon himself. If an irreligious and ungodly father were to ask me to stand godfather to his son, I should certainly feel it my duty to refuse, unless I could expect that I should be allowed to watch over the boy's education myself. Anything is better than undertaking a trust, and then not fulfilling it. In point of fact however, the duty of godfathers and godmothers is not so very difficult to perform, if they set about it in earnest and in the right way. For

generally they are the child's near relations; so that they are in the habit of seeing it from its infancy, and can take it on their knees, and hear it say its little prayers, almost as soon as it can speak. And only think how grateful the child, when it grows up, and has learnt to feel the difference between right and wrong, will be to its godfather for having taken such early notice of it, and taught it to pray and to think of God. It will look on him as indeed its godfather, the father of its religion, the father of its piety, the father who has done the most to bring it to the knowledge and love of God.

I have said the more on this head, because I am afraid the office of godfathers and godmothers is too often undertaken without due consideration, and looked upon as little better than a mere form. But this is a false and worldly view. They have a duty to discharge, as we have seen, and that duty a very important one. They are to feel, and to shew an interest about the child's spiritual welfare. They are to embrace every opportunity of teaching it the way of God. This is what they really take upon themselves by becoming sureties for the infant: this it is their part and duty to perform: and if they omit to do so, they will have, for such neglect of their duty, to bear, not their godchild's burthen, but their own.

Thus you see, the meaning of confirmation is not, what some seem to think it, that the child, when it is confirmed, takes its sins upon its own shoulders. What then is its meaning? and for what purpose are children, when they come to years of discretion, carried before the bishop to be confirmed? To confirm a thing is to give some new assurance of its truth, to establish it on fresh grounds, and to make it more certain. If a man bears witness in a court of justice, and I come forward and say that I know his witness to be true, I am said to confirm his testimony. So, when a man makes a bargain or an agreement for me, and I write word that I approve of it, I am said to confirm that bargain or agreement. Now this is just what you are required to do, when you go before the bishop to be confirmed. Your godfathers and godmothers having made an agreement for you, that Christ shall be your Lord, and that you will be his servants, this agreement you are to confirm, by declaring publicly that you approve of it and consent to it. For this reason, before the bishop lays his hands on any of those who come to him, he asks them all this question: "Do you here, in the presence of God, and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your baptisms, ratifying and confirming the same in your own persons, and acknowledging

yourselves bound to believe and to do those things which your godfathers and godmothers then undertook for you?" And every one who goes to be confirmed, is then to answer, "I do;" that is, "I do here renew the solemn promise which was made in my name at my baptism, that I should faithfully serve and obey God: I do here, as it were, set my hand and seal to the promise, as I would to any law-paper or covenant. I do hereby confirm the promise, and declare that I approve of it; and by God's grace I will keep it to the end of my life."

This is the promise which you are called upon to make, before the bishop lays his hand upon your head. You are called upon to choose the master you will serve, and the way of life you will follow, to declare that choice openly, and to promise solemnly that you will abide by it. The choice must be your own, the resolve and purpose of your own soul, of your own reason, of your own conscience. When you were infants, and unable to promise for yourselves, your godfathers and godmothers made the promise for you. You promised then by proxy, as we call it: but nobody can keep God's commandments by proxy. Else you would find that you would only go to heaven by proxy: and it will be small comfort to us, when we are lying in torments, like the rich man

in the parable, to look up and see our godfathers and godmothers happy in heaven. Therefore, now that you are old enough to promise for yourselves, you are called upon to confirm the promises which were made in your names when you were children: you are to take those vows upon yourselves, and, having done so, to keep them.

But can you keep them? What says the Scripture? It is God that giveth us both to will and to do. Without God's help we can neither do, nor even will. A man can no more raise himself up to heaven by his own natural strength, than a stone can raise itself from the ground and fly upward. But that, which we are quite unable to do for ourselves, God is merciful enough to do for us. The Son of man was lifted up, that he might draw, or lift up all things to him. Jesus Christ, from his victorious cross, looks down on us, and stretches out the right-hand of his mercy to us: if we will only lay hold of it, he will lift us up. In this way we may all get out of the slough of sin, and rise from it to holiness in this world, and to heaven hereafter. A stone may be raised above the ground, if any one will stoop to pick it up: and so may we. "What then!" do you ask, "are we no better than stones?" Would that we were as good! For the stone makes no resistance, but quietly lets itself be lifted up: whereas we do re-

sist God, when he would draw us up to him. We have a will; which the stone has not: and that will too often strives against God's will, instead of striving with it. For this is the real difference between the righteous and the wicked. The righteous try to make God's will their will, and to do as God would have them, trusting that God of his goodness will grant them strength to do, what they cannot do of themselves. The wicked man, on the other hand, chooses to have a will of his own, and does not choose to obey God. He either gives himself no trouble at all, and leads a life of slothful self-indulgence: or, if he does take thought, it is not how to do right, but how to do wrong, in the safest and pleasantest manner. He considers how he may cheat without being found out, how he may lead some innocent girl astray,—how, in short, he may compass the particular wickedness which his heart happens to be set upon. Is not such a man worse than a stone? Would it not be easier to roll a stone up the highest hill in England, than to raise such a man out of his sins? Such a man, do I call him? rather such a corpse! A dead man is a corpse; and the wicked man is dead, dead in trespasses and sins: how then, without a miracle, is such a dead corpse to be raised to newness of life?

Such being our case,—seeing that we have no

strength of ourselves to help ourselves, and all our strength and sufficiency being from God,—so gracious is God, that he has made a covenant with us by baptism, which covenant he will confirm, when you confirm your part of it. So that, when you go before the bishop, there will be a twofold confirmation. You will have to confirm the promises and vows which your godfathers and godmothers made for you in your baptism; and God will confirm all that he promised at your baptism to do for you, provided you go to him with faith and prayer; not without. If you go, as you would to a merry-making, or because it is the custom, without thinking well of the business you are about, without fully purposing from the bottom of your hearts to keep your promise of obeying and loving God, it will be a mere mockery of our heavenly Judge; and you will receive no benefit. But to those who really wish to do as God would have them do,—to those who really trust that God will forgive them all their past sins,—to those who earnestly pray to God to give them repentance and faith,—to all such, be assured of it, God will confirm his promises. He will forgive them, and will send them his Holy Spirit. He will give them the spirit of knowledge, that they may judge aright,—the spirit of wisdom and understanding, that they may believe aright,—the spirit of strength and god-

liness, that they may do aright, and follow a holy course unto their lives end. This is God's confirmation: happy they who have a part in it!

Your confirmation, on the other hand, will consist in your declaring that you assent to all that was promised in your name at your baptism, and in your undertaking to fulfill it. You are to do this by your own act and deed, by your own choice. Two roads are set before you,—the upward road, which leads to heaven,—and the downward road, which leads to hell. Two masters are bidding for your services,—God, who invites you to heaven, —and the devil, who would lure you to hell. Some master you must choose: about that there is no choice. Some way you must walk in: there is no standing still in this world. If you do not strive to mount against the stream, it will sweep you along with it. Your reason, I am sure, finds no difficulty in the choice. You are ready to cry out, "I will obey God, and not the devil, that rebellious, that lying spirit, who seeks to ensnare and destroy me." This, I am sure, is the language of your reason. But what say your wishes? what say your lives? For, if they do the devil's will, you must be the devil's servants. Perhaps however you will ask, whether it be not possible to obey them both a little,—God in all those parts of duty which are easy,—and the devil in one or

two wrong practices, which you are very fond of. My young friends, it is not possible. Jesus Christ himself tells us so plainly: "No man can serve two masters." God commands you to serve him with the whole of your heart: will you think of putting him off with half? If you do, he will reject you: he will have the whole, or none.

If our king and country were in danger, and we were required to enlist and march to London to protect them, what would you think of a man, who should say that he had not made up his mind whether he would enlist and march or no? Would you not think he must either be a coward, or half a traitor? So will Christ think of you, if, when he calls you by his ministers to confirm the promises made in your name, that you would serve and fight under him, you delay and hold back, because you cannot make up your mind whether you will be his or no. But you have already made your choice. You are going ere long openly before the Church to renounce the devil, that cruel tyrant, whose design is to draw you away from your heavenly Father, and to make you rebels and outcasts like himself. Him therefore, and all that he tempts you to, you are going to renounce. God, and not Satan, you are going to promise, shall be your master for the time to come. You will serve the Father, who made you, the Son, who bought you

with his own blood, the Holy Ghost, who offers to come and dwell in your hearts, and to make you pure and holy like himself. You mean well then, and promise fairly. But mind: the promise must be kept. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," said the wisest man that ever lived. Give your hearts to God, while they are yet young and tender. Do not offer your firstfruits to the devil; nor think to cheat the God of heaven with the chaff and refuse of old age. Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation. Watch: for you know neither the day, nor the hour, when your Master cometh. Pray without ceasing: for your strength must come from God, and from him only: and the help, which you do not think worth asking for, he will not give. The Holy Ghost, we are told, is like a lamp. As a lamp must be fed with oil, or else it will go out, so must the flames of holiness, which the Holy Ghost will kindle in your hearts, be kept alive and burning by prayer.

But you have not only a master, you have also a way to choose. There are two ways before you: one is the narrow way which leads to life; the other is the broad way, and leads to destruction. The broad way gives room for many travelers abreast. It is smooth and easy to the feet. Its hedges are full of trees, with fine-looking fruit on them, sweet to the taste and pleasant to the eye,

like the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden. I will not disguise the truth from you: the ways of sin to the natural man do at first seem pleasant. But they end in destruction: the fruit is poison: whoever eats of it will either die, or grieve bitterly over his sin, and wish a thousand times he had never been guilty of it. As for companions, whoever takes that road will be sure of finding plenty of them. All the wicked, all the reprobate, all the children of the devil, the drunkard, the fornicator, the scorner, the sabbath-breaker, the dishonest, the uncharitable, the hardhearted,—all these take the downward road. But besides these companions without, there are others that are sure to start up in a man's own heart, sooner or later, if he takes the way which leads to death. Fear, shame, anguish, remorse, all the terrors of the Lord, beset that road, like a band of thieves; and no one can take it and escape them. Do you fear grief? do you fear shame? do you dread the stings of a troubled conscience? are you afraid of the bottomless pit? Go not along the broad way which leads to destruction.

Rather enter in at the strait gate, and take your journey upward along the narrow way,—narrow only to those who come over to it from the broad one, but open from the beginning, and easy enough of entrance to you, in whose souls by God's grace

goodness is not a thing unnatural. When a man is swollen and puffed out by sin, no wonder he finds it a hard matter to squeeze through the strait gate: he can only do so by leaving his bag of vices behind him. This however cannot yet be the case with you. It is but a few years since you were numbered among those innocents, of whom Christ says, that of such is the kingdom of heaven. Though no others can enter into the path of godliness without such pain and difficulty, that our Saviour likens it to being born again, yet as little children, we are told, we may enter into it easily. And you were little children so lately, that I doubt not you still may enter into it, and walk in it, if you only strive to enter in, and pray to Jesus to let you in. Never mind the thorns and the rough places you may meet with at first starting. Do not be discouraged by the labour of beginning to climb the hill of godliness, along the steep and narrow way. The higher you mount, the air will grow clearer, the light stronger, and your prospects wider and more beautiful. You know how delightful and cheering it is to stand at the top of a hill: where nevertheless you see only earthly things, and are braced only by common air. Judge then, how delightful must be the hill of godliness, where you will catch a prospect of spiritual things, and be cheered and braced by gales from heaven.

Moreover you will be fed with angels food. The Holy Ghost will spread out a plentiful table for you, of contented thoughts and heavenly desires, love, peace, joy, hope, comfort. These will be your supports. These will be your visiters. Do you meet with tribulations? they shall end. Have you sorrows to endure? they shall cease. For death will come, not the enemy, not the avenger, but that quiet peaceful death which receives the Christian into its arms, and carries him out of this life into a better.

And now, my dear children, I beseech the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he will grant you to be strengthened by his Spirit, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, and that you may love him and obey him unto your lives end.

Before I conclude however, let me turn for a moment to you who are older, and who were confirmed perhaps many years ago. You have already made this solemn promise. You have already declared before God and the Church, that you were determined to be God's people. Have you kept your promise? It is registered against you. You may have forgotten it: but God remembers it, and the devil remembers it. He who is now your tempter, will then be your accuser, and will urge your promise against you before the throne of Christ. Yet fear not, ye who are

pious, but timid: fear not on account of your backslidings, ye who truly grieve and repent of them: fear not the malice of the adversary. Turn for mercy to your God and Saviour: throw yourselves at his feet: entreat him to forgive you, and to raise you up to a new and better life of christian holiness: and he will bear your burthens.

SERMON XXIV.

WHO ARE INVITED?

OR,

CHRIST'S DISCIPLES.

MATTHEW XXVI. 27.

Drink ye all of it.

I AM going to speak to you about the blessed sacrament of the Lord's supper, and about the people who may and ought to come to it. This is a very important question, and one concerning which there are many sad mistakes and unhappy scruples. But though the question is important, it is not difficult; at least the difficulties in it are of our own making. Man, as usual, has sought out many inventions, and has lost himself in a wood of his own planting. Whereas God's command is plain. If we would only take that for

our rule, and follow the path he has marked out for us, we should find it straight and clear.

"Drink ye all of it." Such is our Lord's simple command, as we find it recorded in the text. For so great is the merciful lovingkindness of our Saviour and Master, that he orders and would constrain us to do the very things which are most for our good. Human laws, generally speaking, are made to force us to do good, or to abstain from doing harm to others. The laws against murder, the laws against robbery, and the like, are made to prevent our injuring one another. The laws which oblige a man to pay rates and taxes, or, if need be, to be drawn for the militia, or to serve his king and country as a soldier,—all these laws are designed to make a man do his duty, according to his means, to his king and country, and to the aged and infirm poor. But God's laws have a different and a far higher aim. They command us indeed not to do any sort of hurt to others, but to render them every service, and to shew them every kindness in our power. And they threaten against all who shall dare to harm their neighbours, or who shall even be unready to assist them,—against all evildoers, all malicious, miserly, hardhearted, grasping, unfriendly, and uncharitable persons they threaten punishments so lasting and severe, that, compared with them, the worst a human judge can

do to us is as nothing. Yet while God's laws are thus strict in commanding us not to let slip any opportunity of being useful and serviceable to our neighbours, they have another purpose also, to teach and force us to do good to ourselves,—to do true and lasting good to our souls, our real selves. God commands us, and tries to frighten us, and, I had almost said, to bribe us, into doing, not what is good for him, but what is best and most desirable for ourselves.

Thus for instance, God commands us to pray to him. What good can our prayers do to God? Can the prayers and praises of mortal man profit the great Maker and Ruler of heaven and earth? Can they tell him anything he does not know before? Why then are we ordered to pray to him? Because prayers and praises and holy thoughts purify the soul and lift it heavenward, and give it a desire after that communion with God, which is the chief enjoyment of blessed spirits. Therefore God is not content with allowing us to pray to him,—though that of itself would have been a great mercy: he has commanded us to pray to him. He vouchsafes to force us to make use of the inestimable privilege of flying to him for help and comfort, and laying all our wants and all our sorrows at his feet.

In like manner, what can our repentance, our

faith, our holiness and purity, our meekness and self-denial,—what can any of these qualities in us, or all of them together, benefit or profit God? Yet he has commanded us, plainly, strictly, and repeatedly, to repent, to believe in him, to cast away our sinful habits, and to become holy, meek, and pure. Again I ask, why has he done this? For the best and most merciful of purposes. Out of his love to us; because he desires to give us the joys of heaven; and because it is only through repentance and faith, by holiness and purity, by meekness and self-denial, that we can be at all fitted to become partakers in those joys. Therefore does God hedge us in, as it were, with laws on all sides, to keep us from wandering out of the right road: and he sends us his ministers, his warnings and his threatenings, to frighten us when we go astray, and, so to say, to drive us to heaven.

It is the same with regard to the Lord's supper. As it is for our own good that we are commanded to be holy, so it is for our own good that we are commanded to partake of that blessed sacrament, which is at once the most fervent and solemn of all prayers, and the best and most powerful of all means to forward us in holy living. None can suppose that Jesus Christ has given us his flesh to eat, and his blood to drink, for his own sake, for

any good to himself. But if it is not for his own sakė, for his own good, that he has given it to us, he must have given it for our sakes and for our good. And so he has. As he allowed himself to be offered up and sacrificed on the cross, that the world might be redeemed from sin; so does he offer himself continually to all faithful Christians in the sacrament, that they may taste and see how gracious he has been to them, and that their souls may be strengthened and refreshed by feeding on his most precious body and blood; yea, that they may be united and made one with him. Moreover lest we should be so mad as to neglect and turn away from what, if our hearts were right toward God and Christ, we should seek as the most inestimable of blessings,—lest we should think it better to remain separate from Christ, than to eat his flesh and be united with him, God has commanded us in the text to do what, if it be done in faith, will above all things help us forward on the road to everlasting life.

The question however, which, as I said above, I purpose to consider this evening, is, Who may, and who ought to come to the Lord's supper? the text tells us: *all.* "Drink ye *all* of it." Such is Christ's command. But to whom was that command given? To his disciples. Every one then, who is Christ's disciple, is commanded to

drink of that blessed cup, is invited to come to that holy supper of the body and blood of Christ. So far is plain. Some however may wish to justify themselves in keeping away; some may be ignorant; some again may be humble, and may feel themselves unworthy of sitting down to supper with their Lord. Now all these are likely to ask, Who are Christ's disciples? The question need not puzzle us. A disciple means a learner and follower. We read in St Matthew of the disciples of John; they were persons who went to be taught by John. So we read in St Mark of the disciples of the Pharisees: they were persons who went to be taught by the Pharisees. In the same way a disciple of Jesus Christ is a person that seeks to be taught by Jesus Christ. Every one then who wishes to learn from Christ, every one who is trying to follow Christ, every such person is his disciple. He is a pupil of Christ's; he is a scholar of Christ's; he is, in plain English, going to school to Christ: therefore he is one of Christ's disciples, and, as such, is invited and commanded to come to his supper.

But this question,—who are Christ's disciples, and who, as such, are invited to come and feast with him?—is so important, that I shall set the matter before you in another light. Mankind may be divided into three great classes, Heathens

Jews, and Christians. A large part of the world are heathens. I call those heathens, who either have no god at all, or false gods. Whoever is living without God in this world, whoever is walking after his own heart's lusts, whoever is the servant of sin, whoever speaks a good word for it, and says of it, "What can it signify? there is no great harm in it; it is a mere trifle;" though he knows that God has forbidden it,—whoever has set up his idol in his heart, and is worshiping Belial, the god of debauchery and profaneness, or Moloch, the god of revenge and hatred and all fierce passions, or Mammon, the god of riches and worldly-mindedness,—all these are heathens in spirit. They may have been christened; but they are not Christ's: they have left him, and have chosen another master. They may profess to believe in God, and may even draw nigh to him with their lips: but their hearts are far from him. They deny him in their actions, and in their lives: what part then can they have in Christ? It is the duty of the preacher to tell such men, that they must be looked upon as heathens. "Let him be to you as a heathen man," is our Saviour's own sentence (Matt. xviii. 17) against persons calling themselves Christians, yet persisting in an evil course of living.

But beside those who are heathens in spirit,

there are many who in spirit are Jews. I call those Jews, who expect to be saved by their doings. Now how many Jews are there of this kind in every christian land! men who are well satisfied with themselves, and pride themselves on having been bred Protestants, and on being churchmen or dissenters, as it may happen, and who think that, if they come to church, or go to meeting regularly, and lead decent lives, and give a trifle to the poor now and then, all must be well with them. They think that, in doing thus much, they do all that God requires, and fancy themselves in the high road to heaven. Compare this picture of a man expecting to be saved, because he is born a Protestant, and comes to church, and leads a decent life, and sometimes relieves a poor man, with the account of the Pharisee in St Luke, who gave God thanks because he fasted regularly, and kept himself from gross sins; and you will see how thoroughly Jewish all such notions are. The Jewish rule was, "This do, and thou shalt live." Every one then who takes that rule for his guide, every one who puts his trust in what he does, be it in the outward forms and ceremonies of his religion, in living honestly and friendly with his neighbours, or in keeping a soberly and orderly household,—that man's view of religion is a Jewish view: his principles are the principles of a Jew: therefore,

though he may call himself a Christian, he must be looked upon as a Jew in spirit.

Now no man, who is either a heathen or a Jew, can be justly deemed Christ's disciple. No one therefore who is such a heathen as I have described, or such a Jew as I have described,—no one who is living a life of sin, no one who is living a worldly life without care or thought about God, no one who is self-righteous and self-satisfied, and who thinks he can please God by being what is commonly called a good, decent, moral man,—no such persons, I must tell you plainly, ought to come to the Lord's supper. The supper is not spread for Jews and heathens; and Jews and heathens have no business at it.

All the world however, God be praised! is not made up of heathens and Jews. There is a third class of persons, who may truly be called Christians; and for them is that blessed table spread. But who are true Christians? and how are they to be known? A true Christian may be known from a heathen by his practice, and from a Jew by his faith. Instead of walking without God in the world, he feels that God is his King and Father. Instead of serving sin and Satan, he makes it his chief aim and wish to serve Christ. Instead of taking pleasure in wickedness, he strives against temptation. If he happens to be hurried into sin,

he is ashamed, and grieves over his misbehaviour, and becomes more careful for the future. Above all, no sin with him is a small sin. It is enough for him that God has forbidden it. What God has forbidden, he dares not do. In all these points the true Christian may easily be known from the heathen.

Moreover, as he is distinguished from the heathen by his practice, so is he distinguished from the Jew by his faith. Instead of expecting to be saved by his works, he puts his trust in Christ alone. He knows that in Christ Jesus neither baptism, nor coming to church, nor any other form or ceremony, can avail anything of itself, but a new creature. He feels that to become a new creature is a task beyond his power, that he cannot make himself over again. Therefore he prays for the Spirit of God to create him anew after his heavenly Father's image, in righteousness and true holiness. Again, instead of being satisfied with himself, and thinking he can earn God's favour by leading a virtuous life, he knows that, if he lived the best life that ever mortal man lived, he should still be an unprofitable servant. He is conscious too how far his own life falls short of that test. Therefore, instead of being satisfied with himself, and thinking he has done enough, he is anxious to grow better, and to push forward. And why does

he wish this? Not from believing God to be a hard and cruel master; but because he desires to become more like him; because he wishes to shew his dutiful love toward him by keeping his commandments; and because this is the only return he can make for all that his Saviour suffered on his account. Thus he is ever pressing forward; and though he may stumble and fall back now and then, as people are always in danger of doing when they are climbing a steep and slippery hill, yet he gains ground on the whole: he learns from his falls to be more watchful over himself: he grows more careful to regulate, not his outward actions only, but his thoughts and wishes: he becomes more attentive to God's word read and preached, and takes it for his rule and model, instead of complying with the opinions of the world. Lastly, he does all this humbly and thankfully: thankfully, because he feels how much he owes to Jesus, his Maker and only Saviour; humbly, because he knows that, whatever progress he may make, it is not by his own strength, but by the Spirit of God working in him.

Such is the true Christian. I have described him in rather an advanced state, when he is nearly full grown, that you might see him in his just proportions. But long before a man reaches this state of grace, he may be called a sincere Christian. The

essential points are, a sense of our own unworthiness in the sight of God,—a sense of our guilt and danger for having broken his holy laws,—a sense of our weakness,—and a conviction that without help from above we cannot live up to what we know to be right. These three senses,—the sense of our natural unworthiness, the sense of our own personal guilt in having committed such and such sins, and the sense of our inability to get out of the quagmire into which sin has plunged us,—these are the three foundations of Christianity. A man who has not these three senses,—a man who thinks that sin is a small matter, or that he is as good as he need be, or that he can make himself good if he pleases,—knows, and can know, nothing more of Christianity, than a blind man can know of light, or a deaf man of sound. On the other hand, whoever is conscious that he should have been lost for ever, if God had cut him off in the midst of his sins,—whoever has felt the burthen and guilt of sin lying heavy upon him, and has fled for refuge to the cross of Christ, and has sought for pardon through Christ's merits, and has resolved to turn to God in earnest, and to take Christ for his Saviour, his teacher, and his Lord,—whoever has determined to tread the path of God's law, not in his own strength, but in humble trust that the Spirit of God will come to him and

support him,—that man is a Christian. He may be weak: he may have many infirmities still hanging about him; he may still feel the flesh lusting against the spirit; he may still feel a wish at times come across his mind to return to his sinful gains and pleasures; he may still be visited by the evil thought,—"How hard the service of God is! he is such a strict master; he never lets me have my own way; I must always be denying myself; and the road that leads to him is so rough and steep; it looks much greener and softer down in the valley of sin which I am leaving." Evil thoughts of this kind will trouble a man during the earlier stages of his journey. But let him shake them off: let him drive them away by prayer: let his soul turn a deaf ear to them: there is no reason why his spirit shonld be cast down: though tempted, he is still a Christian.

There is no commoner artifice of Satan's, than to put evil thoughts of this sort into the mind at the beginning of our christian journey. By it he answers a twofold purpose. If he succeeds in his attack, and we listen to the temptation, he draws us back into sin. Even when the attack fails, the Christian will be so angry with himself for having been thus basely tempted, that he is led to say to himself, "I am a worthless wretch; I can never be admitted into heaven; it is of no use my

trying to please God." So he despairs, and slackens his efforts; and the devil's purpose is answered in this way.

Let me guard you then against this double danger. Against the danger of listening to the tempter, and falling back into sin, I need not say much. For why did you leave sin at all? except because you felt its bondage to be intolerable, and knew that it must end in hell. Will its yoke be less heavy, its end less dreadful, if you return to it? You know that it will not. Sin will still be sin; and hell will still be hell. Therefore, when the evil thought comes across you, that God will never allow you to have your own way, let your answer be, "God knows what is best for me; therefore his way shall be my way." When the tempter says to you, "See how others are enjoying themselves, while you are moping and grudging yourself the slightest amusement;" make answer, "True; but God has hidden treasures in store for me, greater than man can dream of. My present self-denial will be made up to me richly and abundantly in the end." Again, when the tempter whispers, "This road is so hard; this hill of godliness is so steep; look back on the valley of sin, how much softer the ground is, and how much greener!" then above all, answer, "I know that softness and greenness. I have made trial of

it already: it is the softness and greenness of a marsh, over which whosoever walks is sure to sink in, and to be swallowed up sooner or later. I have had enough of such softness. The garments of my soul are still spotted with it, and will be so until my master Jesus has washed them in his all-cleansing blood. The hill too is steep, I know: but then its air is healthy; and the breezes of heaven play round the top. Down below the air is dank, and breeds the cholera: the place is full of death. As for looking back, I dare not, lest I become as Lot's wife."

Such is the answer you should make to the tempter, when he tries to lure you back to sin, As for that other danger, the danger of despairing, because you are troubled with evil thoughts, let me guard you against that also. It is sin, not temptation, which defiles the soul. Our Saviour himself was tempted: but he was not defiled thereby. Temptation, unless we listen to it, can no more wound the soul, than a bullet, unless it hits a man, can wound the body. It is very painful indeed and annoying to the Christian to be assaulted with base temptations; and so must it be very annoying to the young recruit to hear the bullets whistling about him, when he first goes into battle. But is he to be dismayed on that account? He knows it to be his duty, as the king's soldier,

to face the bullets of the enemy. In like manner let us comfort ourselves with the thought that we are doing our duty as Christ's soldiers, when we are shot at by temptations, which are the bullets of our enemy, the devil. A soldier must not run fool-hardily into peril; nor must we run into temptation. We must not put ourselves in its way: but if it comes to us, we must bear it, and shelter ourselves against it as best we may, behind the shield of faith. If at the end of the day the recruit has escaped unhurt, what is he the worse for all the bullets that have flown by him? The more there are of them, the more reason has he to thank God for having preserved him. So should it be with us. Instead of letting our temptations lead us to despair, we should turn them into sources of thanksgiving, and say in the words of holy David, "The Lord is my shield and my defense: he has covered my head in the day of battle. The enemy has thrust sore at me, that I might fall; but the Lord was my help; the Lord is my strength. I will make him my song: because he has become my salvation." Thus even temptations may be turned to our spiritual advantage, if we are grateful to God for preserving us from them, if we are taught by them to distrust ourselves, and to know our own weakness; above all, if they lead us to pray more earnestly to the

Spirit to purify our hearts and minds, that we may learn to hate sin, as well as to forsake it, and to love holiness, as well as to follow after it.

You see from what has been said, that a man may be a Christian, for all he is tempted, just as a soldier may live and fight, for all he has been shot at by the enemy. Be not disheartened then by your weakness and your temptations, provided you strive against them. Remember that a weak Christian is still a Christian, and a tempted Christian is still a Christian, for all his weakness and temptation. The great question for you to ask yourselves is not, "Am I strong? am I perfect? am I holy?" but, "Am I a Christian? or am I a heathen, or a Jew?" If you are either Jews or heathens, you are not invited to Christ's table. But if so, think of the shame and danger of being Christians without Christianity, of being heathens or Jews in heart and life, after receiving the cross of Christ on your forehead. Of this however I will not speak. Let me rather turn to the true Christian, to the man, be he who he may, who has taken Christ for his teacher and guide, and has enrolled himself among Christ's disciples. To all such persons the command is plain: "Drink ye all of it:" not, "drink ye of it, if ye are strong;" not, "drink ye of it, if ye are far advanced on your heavenly journey;" but, "drink ye *all*

of it." Are you weak? Come to the cup of strength. It was at the beginning of his journey that Elijah was fed by the angel. He would only have eaten once; "but the angel came again the second time, and said, Arise and eat; for the journey is too great for thee" (1 Kings xix. 7). So will our christian journey be too great for us, if we will not eat the food which Christ has so mercifully set before us. The sacrament of the Lord's supper is not meant to be a proof of holiness, but to be the means of holiness. It is not to be taken in a pharisaical spirit, with the view of telling our neighbours that we are good Christians already. It is to be taken in a humble spirit, with the desire of being made better than we are. Come to it then, brethren, and eat it in that spirit, as the means of being made more holy,—as a method of drawing nearer to Christ than we can do in any other way.

SERMON XXV.

THE UNTHANKFUL LEPERS.

LUKE xvii. 17.

Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

THESE words were spoken by our Lord just after his great miracle of cleansing the ten lepers. The history of that miracle is so often read in church, that I hope most of you know it well. But as some may not remember all the circumstances, I will begin with reminding you of the chief of them. As our Saviour was going up from Galilee, where he usually lived, to one of the great religious feasts at Jerusalem, he was met by ten men, who were lepers. The poor men did not dare come up to him: for the leprosy is so filthy and catching a disease, that the unhappy persons who had it were obliged by the law of Moses to live by themselves, and to cry, "Unclean, unclean!" when they were

out of doors, that nobody might go near them. (Lev. xiii. 45.) So these lepers, instead of coming to Christ to be healed by him, were forced to be content with crying out, as he passed along the road, "Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us!" Our Saviour, I need not tell you, might have cured them with a word. Instead however, of doing so, he only said to them, "Go, shew yourselves to the priests." As if he had said, "Why do you call out to me? You know what the law of Moses commands, that every leper must go to the priest, and have his flesh duly examined. That is what you ought to do." So they went their way. Probably they were a good deal disappointed that Jesus had not cured them at once. Still they saw that what he said was reasonable and just. They felt it must be right to obey the laws of their church and country. So they went to show themselves to the priests, as Jesus had bid them. Thus far there is nothing surprising in the story. But now comes a great miracle. As the men were walking along they found that their leprosy had left them, and they were healed. How soon this took place, we are not told; probably soon after Jesus spoke to them. Nor are we told how it happened; except that of course the cure was wrought by the power and mercy of the blessed Son of God. But one thing we are told, that only

one of them turned back to glorify God, and to give Jesus thanks for his goodness. And he was a Samaritan, or, as we should say, a dissenter. For the Samaritans were much the same thing among the Jews, that the dissenters are in England. Their religion was in the main the same as the Jewish religion. They believed in Moses as the Jews did. But they differed from the Jews in smaller matters, and made those differences a ground of religious separation. So, instead of praying and offering sacrifices along with their countrymen, as they ought to have done, in God's house, the temple of Jerusalem, they had a place of worship of their own. We shall not be far wide of the mark then in calling the Samaritans Jewish dissenters. They were wrong in leaving the worship of their fathers, and splitting from their brethren for small and trifling points of difference. I say, they were wrong in this: because the Psalms teach us how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. Still, though the Samaritans as a body were wrong in this, there might be many good and pious persons among them, just as there are many good and pious persons among the dissenters now. And this leper was one of them. For he came back to Jesus, and threw himself at his feet, and gave him thanks for his merciful kindness. But alas! he was the only one to

do so. The other nine went their way, without once turning back to say so much as, we thank you. This ingratitude of theirs seems to have pained Jesus, as well it might; and half in sorrow he said, in the words of our text, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?"

These words, I am afraid, may be applied with truth to many persons and many things, beside the lepers and their leprosy. How many in times of sickness, when God afflicts their body, and death is staring them in the face, are ready enough to make promises of repentance and amendment, if God will only spare them this once! They cry, as the lepers cried before they were healed, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us! have mercy on us, almighty God! deliver us this once from the pains of death; and we will lead a new life, and serve thee faithfully for the time to come." Such is their prayer, while the sickness is upon them. Well, it pleases God to hear their prayer: he gives them another trial: he raises them up from their sick bed, and restores them to health and strength. What follows? Do they keep in mind the vows which they made during their trouble? Do they give themselves up to the service of God, and throw themselves at the feet of Jesus, or rather lay their hearts and their sins there, which is the thing spiritually meant? One in a way may be

grateful enough to do this. But how many do nothing of the sort! How often in such cases has one reason to say, "Ten were cleansed; but where are the nine?"

What I have just said of bodily sickness, is equally true of afflictions of another kind. How many persons, when the hand of God is heavy upon them, and smites down parent, or sister, or brother, or wife, or child, before their eyes,—how many at such an hour will feel their hearts softened, and call their sins to remembrance, and promise to turn to God in earnest, if he will only comfort them in their sorrow! God does comfort them. He takes them at their word, and heals their broken hearts. And what follows? Too often the same sad story. The vows made in sorrow are forgotten in joy. The repentance and amendment are put off. Sinful desires spring up anew, and lead to sinful actions. Old habits regain their sway: and out of ten perhaps who have been comforted, we have need to ask, where are the nine? Will it always be thus? We trust not. For, if the nine continue to walk away from Jesus in this world, they will be driven away from him in the world to come. Whoever denies Christ before men, him will Christ deny before the throne of God. Whoever shuts his heart against Christ in this world, against him will the gates of heaven

be shut. Think of seeing those gates shut against you, never to open again, because you heeded not the time of your visitation! that is, because you threw away the opportunities of repentance which God granted you: because, when he has given you a respite from pain and sorrow, and has raised you from a sick bed, and restored you to peace of mind, you have not praised him for his goodness, nor been mindful of his mercies, but have gone on in your evil courses, just as if you owed him neither thanks nor service. Do not deceive yourselves. God will not allow himself to be mocked. He does not value promises of amendment: he must have the amendment itself. The being called Master will not satisfy him; unless he is your Master in truth. Make him your Master then. Do as the grateful Samaritan did. Whenever God shews you any mercy, glorify and praise him for it, by coming to him, and following him, and staying with him to your lives end.

Such are some of the plainer practical lessons which we may learn from the history of the ten lepers. We may learn from it, how much readier men are in crying to God for help when they are in trouble, than in coming to him when he has delivered them out of it. We may learn from it, how apt we are to forget any good resolutions we have made in sickness or affliction; and how ne-

cessary it must therefore be to keep a strict watch over ourselves to prevent our forgetting them. Indeed the danger of this is so great, that I know not how it can well be avoided, unless we make a practice of examining and trying ourselves by those very resolutions. Suppose a man has been given to the sin of drinking, or of swearing, or of covetousness, or of dishonesty: when he is in affliction, he will probably make a special resolution against that particular sin. Let him keep his resolution in mind; and when God has taken off his affliction, let him examine himself rightly whether he has kept it. "I promised, when I was in trouble, not to take God's name in vain: have I done so today?" "I promised to abstain from drink: have I done so?" Without some such regular self-examination, old habits will come back on you by little and little, and undermine and wash away your good resolutions, and make you twofold more the children of the devil than you were before. Moreover from this story we may learn what return we should make to God for any mercy he may vouchsafe us. We should glorify the Father by our lives; and we should throw ourselves at the feet of Christ.

But there is a fourth lesson to be drawn from this story of the ten lepers, different from any I have yet mentioned. The evils hitherto spoken of

do not befall all men equally. Few indeed live long without one or more dangerous sicknesses. Few live long without having to mourn over the loss of some dear relation. Some however have more sickness than others; and some have to mourn oftener than others. In these points there is a difference between man and man. But in one sort of misery we are all alike. We are all sinners, In this do we most resemble the ten lepers. Like them too, while the leprosy of sin is upon us, we dare not of our natural selves draw near to God. We know, — our conscience tells us, that we are justly offensive in his eyes, which are purer than to behold iniquity. The utmost we should dare to do, if Christ had not reconciled us, would be to stand afar off, and to cry to him, " Have mercy upon us." We might indeed have gone and shewn ourselves to the priests. We might, had we been Jews, have consulted the law of Moses. And what should we have been told? Only that the leprosy was upon us; but not how to cure it: for the law of Moses did not teach that. The priest was only to examine the man, and make out whether his disorder was the leprosy. If it was, there was no remedy for it; he was declared to be unclean, and was left to bear his misery as he could. So would it have been with the leprosy of sin, had Christ never come into

the world. But when Jesus came down from heaven, he brought a cure for the leprosy of our souls. We need no longer despair. If we cry to him in faith, we shall be made clean. He still tells us indeed to shew ourselves to the priest. He tells us to use all the means of grace and of instruction, which he has so plentifully provided for us. If we do this humbly and obediently, our leprosy will leave us. Not that we shall be cured all of a sudden. Nor perhaps shall we be able to tell exactly how it began to leave us, or when: for the kingdom of God cometh not by observation. But we shall find after a time that we have grown cleaner than we were, that our sores are healing, and that we have gained strength.

But why do I say, we *shall* find this? when I am sure I may appeal to the consciences of many persons here present, whether they have not found it so already. Are there not hearts in this congregation, that can say with truth, "We fear God more than we did: we love him better: we sin against him less often; we are more grieved when we do wrong, than we used to be; we take more pleasure in praying to him, and in hearing and reading his holy word." Some such hearts there must be amongst you. If there are, know that you are just in the plight of the ten lepers who were healed of their leprosy. The only difference is,

that they were cured at all once: whereas your cure is begun, but not completed. In everything else your plight is like theirs. Like theirs, your malady was not to be cured by any human means. Like them, you have called to Jesus to have mercy on you; and he has been as merciful, or rather far more merciful, to you than he was to them. For in them he only healed the leprosy of the body; in you he is healing the leprosy of the soul.

Now what return should you make to the Lord for all the benefits he has done to you? You should receive the cup of salvation. You ought to have received it this morning. It was ready filled for you. It was held out to you. You were invited to drink of it. Have you done so? I spoke to you plainly and strongly on this matter last Sunday. I explained to you, that Jews and heathens, as I called them, or, in other words, those who are living in a course of sin, and those who put their trust in their observance of outward forms, are not invited to Christ's table. The impenitent sinner is not invited to it; because he has no thought or care or feeling about God. He does not obey God. He is in fact at enmity with God. Therefore it would be boldness and impiety in him to shew himself at the Lord's table. Again, to the formalist, who merely puts on a shew of religion, while his conduct bears no marks of its power,

—to him the sacrament would only be a form the more: therefore I cannot advise him to come to it. Moreover, they who come to God, must come humbly and thankfully. They must feel how gracious it is in Christ, to invite them to his table. They must not fancy they are doing Christ a favour or a benefit, or that they are earning anything from him by coming to his Supper. On the contrary, they must feel that the favour and the benefit are all on their side, and that their Saviour is shewing them the greatest honour, and offering them the greatest blessing, in calling them to partake of his body and blood. Unless a man comes to the Lord's table thus humbly and thankfully, he will carry away no blessing from it, but rather a curse. Therefore the impenitent sinner and the formalist, or the heathen and the Jew, will do well to keep away from the Lord's supper, until they have seen the error of their ways, and have repented, and become Christians in reality, not in name only.

But what has the true Christian, who is neither an impenitent sinner, nor a formalist,—what has he to fear from coming to his Master's table? Can he not plead his Lord's command? "Drink ye *all* of it." Were the King to come into this part of the country, and ask all the peasantry to a great supper, how do you think you would best shew

your respect and loyalty? By going to the supper? or by staying away? Suppose the King were to order that no one should sit down to his table in dirty or ragged clothes, would that keep you away? Your clothes might be old; they might be threadbare: they might be mended and patched; but you would take care that they were clean, and had no holes in them. Were the King to say to you, "What do you mean by coming to my supper in such an old patched suit?" would you be at a loss for an answer? You would tell him, old as it was, it was the best you had, that you had mended and cleaned it as well as you could, and that you hoped he would excuse your not being better drest; for you were not rich enough to buy new clothes, and so had come in those, rather than stay away, when he had invited you. Such is the answer you would make to the King, if you were not tongue-tied by fear. Depend upon it, too, he would accept your excuse, and be pleased with what you had done, and would probably tell his pursebearer to inquire into your story, and, if it was true, and you were really too poor to help yourself, then to give you money to buy new clothes with. This is what our good and bountiful King would be likely to do on such an occasion. And is Christ less good? Is the King of kings less bountiful? Why not go to his supper then, when he calls you, just

as you would go to the King's supper, if he called you? As to your having no proper clothes, no white robe to come before the Son of God in, make the most of the clothes you have; clean them well, mend them as neatly as you can; and then say in your hearts to Jesus, "I have no better clothes, O Lord; I am too poor to buy a white robe for myself: do thou, Lord, take pity on me, and clothe me in the robe of thy righteousness." Such a prayer, poured forth from a humble heart, will never be offered up in vain. Jesus will pardon the imperfections, and accept the devotion of your service. He will approve your coming to him, and will feed your spirits with his dainties. Or can you think that Jesus Christ, when he bids you to his supper, means to do you any hurt? Would he call you to his feast, unless it were to do you good? Be not faithless then, nor doubtful, but believing. Trust Christ, that he knows better than you do, what is really good and wholesome for you; and when he calls you next, be not slack to come.

In saying this, I speak to every one of you, who is minded to walk in Christ's ways, but especially to those who were confirmed two or three months ago. About you, my young friends, there can be no doubt, I trust: you mean to be Christ's disciples: for it is only a few weeks since you solemnly

promised it in the face of God and man: and surely you cannot have changed your minds already. No; you still think and purpose, as you thought and purposed, when I sent you with so much satisfaction to our bishop, that he might bless you, and pray over you, and lay his hands on you. You then started afresh on your Christian journey, across the wilderness of this world, toward Horeb, the mount of God. Before one enters on a journey, it is well to have strengthened the body with food. When the journey is long, and through a wilderness, where no food is to be had, it is running a great risk to set out fasting. Nor is it less dangerous to set out on a spiritual journey fasting; seeing that, if you faint by the way, the world cannot yield you any refreshment. Eat then the body, and drink the blood of Christ, that you may be strengthened and supported on your journey toward holiness and God. Do not tell me you are too young. The younger you are, the more need have you of all the grace and help you can get. Do not tell me you are unworthy. Unworthy to do what? Can a man be unworthy to obey his Saviour? Can he be unworthy, when his heart is fainting, to strengthen it with heavenly food? Can he be unworthy, when his soul is sick, to seek the most healing medicine? For this is what the sacrament is.

It is food and medicine for the soul, which Christ, your Master, orders you to take. To refuse the medicine, because you are sick, is surely very foolish. If you are Christ's disciples in heart and purpose, you have no choice about the matter. He commands you to come to him; and you must either do so, or disobey him. If he had not invited and commanded us to come, you would be quite right in staying away. It would then befit such miserable sinful creatures as we are, to stand afar off, as the lepers did, and to cry to him, without daring to go near him. But he does call us: therefore to stay away is to disobey him. If he had called the ten lepers, would they not all have rejoiced in going to him? He did not call them; so nine kept away. But the tenth took courage from gratitude and love, and went to him without being called. Was Christ angry with the man? Did he bid him begone? On the contrary, he received him graciously, and sent him away in peace. So too will he send you away in peace, if you too have the heart to come to him. Think, I beseech you, of these things; lay them up in your minds; ponder them well. Remember how evil a thing it is to disobey God. Consider how blessed a thing it must needs be, to be united

and spiritually made one with the everlasting Son of God. And then, when I have next to invite you in my Master's name to his supper, I shall no longer have to say within myself, There were ten cleansed; but where are the nine?

ADDRESS

TO THE INHABITANTS

OF GREAT AND LITTLE ALTON.

My good Friends,

I dare say you will be surprised at receiving a little tract from me of my own writing: and perhaps you will be still more surprised on reading it, to find what that tract is. It is an old friend, as you will soon discover, though it comes to you under a new name. I call it an Address; but it is in fact the sermon I preached in Little Alton church the Sunday before last, on my recovery from my late illness. When I wrote that sermon, I had no thought of printing it. But it seemed to make an impression on many of you who heard it: and this has led me to hope, that by having it printed, so that you can read it and ponder it quietly by yourselves, the impression may be kept alive in your hearts, and deepened to your souls good. Some time hence perhaps I may carry my plan a little further, and choose out of my Alton

sermons some ten or twelve of those which shall appear to me the best fitted to be read by your own firesides, and the likeliest to set you thinking and feeling as Christians ought to think and feel. Those sermons I shall publish, that others may have an opportunity of profiting by them as well as you. But in this tract I have been led by the occasion and the subject to say so much about myself, that a stranger could not enter into it, and feel about it, as you will. So I have printed it simply for the pleasure of giving it away in the two parishes, under the title of an Address to you.

As such, I beg you to accept it. Bear in mind, I pray you, while you are reading it, that it is not the world at large I am addressing in it: it is spoken to you. Nay rather let each among you consider it as addrest to himself; and let him read it as he would a letter from a friend about a business which concerns him nearly. Believe me, the matters spoken of in this Address do concern you all very nearly indeed. Even the affectionate regard for you, my beloved friends and neighbours, which, I hope, every page breathes,—even this will have its spiritual use, if it raise your thoughts from the feeble and imperfect love of one who is a sinner like yourselves, to the surpassing, the divine, the all-perfect love of our common Master and Saviour Jesus Christ, who loves us, and gave

his life for us, to redeem us, and win us to himself. This is the great, the heavenly point, on which it is the duty of a Christian minister to fix his people's hearts and minds, even on the love of Christ for them, and his desire to see them numbered among his true and faithful servants. Unless we do this for you, we do nothing for you worth doing. My preaching, my writing, my very living among you, and serving God's house and altar, —all these things will be useless, and worse than useless to your souls, unless they raise your thoughts to Christ, and lead you through him to God the Father.

And now, what can I add more? except a prayer, that the blessing of God may rest upon us,—upon our bodies, upon our minds, upon our souls, upon our families,—to bring us all into the right way, to watch over us, and guide us, and defend us, and forward us along the road to heaven! Such is the prayer for you, and for himself,

Of your sincere Friend and Minister,

AUGUSTUS WILLIAM HARE.

Alton Rectory, May 27, 1833.

PSALM lxxx. 1, 2.

O how amiable are thy dwellings, thou Lord of Hosts! My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord.

WEAK as I still am, I cannot see you all assembled in this sacred place, without addressing a few words to you. And what text could I take for that address, better than the one I have just read to you: "O how amiable are thy dwellings, thou Lord of Hosts! My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord." In the Bible translation of the Psalms, you will find the text a little different: there, instead of "how amiable are thy DWELLINGS," the words are "how amiable are thy TABERNACLES." To all intents and purposes however the two translations are the same. The thing intended in both is to express the loveliness and excellence of those places which God is pleased to appoint, for the manifesting of his glory to his servants, and for receiving their offerings and prayers. This in the Bible translation is called the tabernacles of God; because when the Great Jehovah, after bringing the chil-

dren of Israel out of Egypt, became their Lord and King, his first dwelling among them was a tabernacle or tent. At that time, as we read in the book of Exodus, the children of Israel were in the wilderness, journeying toward the promised land: and so God, who never requires from us anything out of reason or beyond our power, did not tell them to build him a house, which would have been ill-suited to the place and time; but commanded them to make him a movable dwelling, that, when the camp of Israel moved, his presence might move with it. The Lord of Hosts, when he led the armies of Israel, condescended to do as his followers and soldiers did, and abode like them in a tabernacle or tent. After the land of Canaan had been conquered, the tabernacle, or rather tabernacles, (for there were two of them one within the other,) were set up in Shiloh, and God had no other dwelling-place in Israel for several hundred years. At length, when Solomon had built the temple at Jerusalem, he brought into it the tabernacles of the Lord with all the holy vessels:* and so the temple became God's earthly dwelling. And now that the temple is destroyed, where on earth does God dwell now? In one sense indeed, and that the highest sense, he dwells in the heart of

* For an account of the tabernacles and their contents, see Hebrews ix. 1—7.

every true believer: as it is written, "Thus saith the Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, I dwell with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isaiah lvii. 15). But besides, he has his appointed dwellings among Christians, as he had among the Jews of old. And what are these? What should they be, but the places where the sacrifice of praise and prayer is offered to him, the places where his law is read and explained to his people on the Christian Sabbath, the places where your children are brought to the Lord and consecrated to him in the laver of regeneration, the places where the bread which came down from heaven is set from time to time upon the holy table, to be the nourishment of Christian souls. Our churches are now God's earthly dwellings; and it is of them that the Christian, who has been prevented for any time from attending the worship of the sanctuary, would say, "How amiable are thy dwellings, O Lord of Hosts! my soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord."

Believe me, it is not a small thing to be obliged to keep the house, Sunday after Sunday, especially at the holy season which has just been passing over our heads. There was Good Friday, when I could have wished to speak to you of the bloody sacrifice upon the cross. There was Easter Sunday, when it is a special delight to every

true Christian to join his brethren in rejoicing that our Redeemer liveth; yea, that he liveth who so late was dead; and now, behold, he is alive for evermore, and holds in his mighty hands the keys of hell and death (Rev. i. 18). Then there was the Thanksgiving Sunday; when we were called upon to thank the Lord with heart and voice for sparing us, notwithstanding our many sins, and for passing over our humble dwellings, when he smote the populous cities of the land. While there were many places, even in this favoured country, where they counted the deaths from that pestilence, the cholera, by the hundred; while there were two or three parishes in which almost as many died as were left alive; among us, and in all the neighbouring places, there was not one that died of it. Why was such peculiar mercy shewn to us? Why did the Lord so mercifully spare us, when so many fell around us? Shall we take the merit to ourselves? Shall we say in our hearts, that we were so much more righteous, so much more religious, so much more godly, so much more sober, than the people of other places, that God spared us, while he punished them? Shall we say that it was because we, like the Israelites of old, had sprinkled the blood of the Lamb of God upon our hearts and consciences by a pure and lively faith, that the destroying angel

passed over this happy vale, when he went forth to smite our countrymen? We dare not say any of these things: we dare not lie so greatly and so presumptuously to God, as either to say or think that we do not deserve the wrath of God for our sins, quite as much as they can have done for theirs. We must all know ourselves too well: we must all, I trust, see our own faults and feel our own sinfulness too strongly, to fancy we were preserved from that destructive cholera by our own goodness and our own merits. No, if God had dealt with us according to our deserts, we should have perished just as others did. But he was minded to be pitiful and long-suffering toward us; and so we were not consumed (Lament. iii. 22). While many tens and hundreds of thousands perished in foreign countries, and many thousands perished in several parts of England,—in our own houses, and those of our immediate neighbourhood, there was not so much as one dead. And can we be too thankful to God for these his benefits? Can we be too thankful to him for having quite delivered our native land from this plague, after having so lightly afflicted it, lightly in comparison with other lands? Can we be too thankful to him, for having been ourselves spared from it, and left alive, as we all are at this day? It was to shew our sense of these his great

mercies, that we were called on two Sundays ago to enter into his presence with thanksgiving, and to come into his courts with praise. Think what a pain and disappointment it must have been to me, your minister, to be unable on so joyful an occasion to mingle my prayers and thanks with yours; that so the voice of the pastor, and the voices of his flock, might have mounted up together; and the great High Priest, the chief Shepherd of our souls, might have presented our united praises as an offering to our Father and our God.

It is on these occasions that one feels most strongly the blessing of united prayer. It is very well for a man to say, I can pray at home. So he can, and so he ought at other times. But let Sunday come round, especially if it be a great Sunday like Easter, which is the Sunday of Sundays; or let it be some day of public thanksgiving, when the whole nation high and low is summoned to appear before the Lord, and to tell out his merciful works with gladness; and the Christian will soon learn how much he loses in being deprived of the blessings of social worship. A few weeks experience will be enough to teach him how poor and lonely a thing it is to kneel and pray by oneself, in comparison with the overflowing delight of praising God in the great congregation; till at last he is ready to cry out with holy David,

"How amiable are thy dwellings, O Lord of Hosts! My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord. O when shall I appear again before the presence of my God!"

Indeed, brethren, I know not how it may have been with you, nor whether you have missed me, during the time that I have been kept away from you: but I can truly say, that I have missed you. I have missed the well-filled benches near me; I have missed the familiar faces in the gallery; I have missed the delight of praying with you, and the pleasure of instructing you. At the season of the great festivals, and especially during Passion Week and Easter, the spirit of the coldest Christian is more alive than at other times. It is impossible to hear the history of Christ's sufferings, —how he was scourged, and nailed to a cross, and left to hang there till he died, amid the mocks and laughter of the bystanders,—it is impossible for men to hear all this with their ears, and to have it almost brought before their eyes, and to know that Jesus went through it all for their sakes, that they might be forgiven, and might live,—it is hardly possible for anybody to hear all this, without having his heart burn within him. These then are the seasons, when the minister who loves his people, has most pleasure in speaking to them and teaching them. He loves to strike while the iron

is hot, while the heart is moved and softened, in the hope that at such a time by God's grace his words may sink deeper. And yet it was just at this particular season, when I should so much have enjoyed being with you, that it pleased God to afflict me with sickness, to separate me for a time from you, my people and friends. Do not suppose I murmur at this dispensation: far from it. God knows best what means and what instruments to employ for the conversion and instruction of his people. If I had been in health, you would have been taught by me alone. As it is, you have had the advantage of hearing different teachers; and it may be, the words of some of them may have sunk deeper in some minds, and have done them more good, than anything I should have said, if I had preached to you. If it be so, God be praised for it! Yea, God be praised for my sickness, even had it been more severe, if it be the means of calling any one among you to a knowledge of his saving will! But still it did grieve me much, that I could not be praying with you, and teaching you. I was sorry that, though it was Lent, there should be no Wednesday Prayers. I was sorry that we were obliged to drop our Tuesday's lecture, just as we had got to some of the most interesting and beautiful and practical chapters in the Acts. Above all I was sorry,

when Sunday came, to be forced to stay at home, and pray for you in private, instead of praying with you in public. Never did the little church appear more beautiful in my eyes than on those Sundays, while I looked at it with a melancholy pleasure, and watched you as you went into God's house, or returned from it. Truly, at such times, I could well have said with David, "How amiable, how lovely are thy tabernacles, thou Lord of Hosts! My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord."

I shall conclude this Address with two or three practical remarks on what has just been said. In the first place I would have you remember, that it is not the minister alone who is liable to be kept by illness from entering into the courts of the Lord. Any of you are as likely as I was, to be kept prisoners in your houses for weeks together. How will you grieve, when that time comes, if your conscience tells you that you have slighted the privilege of worshiping God in the congregation! Do not throw away the blessing you now enjoy of being able to come into the Lord's house, lest you tempt God to take it away from you. When I say, the blessing of coming into the Lord's house, I need hardly add, that it is useless coming, unless you come to pray, and to learn. If the King were to admit you into his royal presence, for the pur-

pose of receiving your petitions, you would hardly think of turning your back upon him, or of stopping your years while he is speaking to you, or of letting your thoughts wander to something else, instead of laying your wants before him. None of you would think it good behaviour to behave so to your earthly king: and yet how many in this, and in every congregation, behave so to the King of kings! How many come before him, under the pretence of having a petition to offer! But do they offer it? No: the petition is forgotten; the prayer is never uttered at all, or at most is repeated with the lips, while the heart is either asleep or far away. Nor is this all. The very word of God, when read, is scarcely heeded. Some may listen to it at the time: but even those who do so, rarely trouble themselves to think, how can I apply this to my own case? how can I profit by what I am now hearing, so as to serve God better than I did before? There are few, I fear, in any congregation, who are at the pains to apply the truths read to them out of Scripture to their own needs in this practical and searching manner: and yet this is one of the chief purposes for which you ought to come to church. You should come to pray for the help of God's Holy Spirit to make you better: you should come to learn what you can do toward bettering yourselves. Unless you do

come for these purposes, how will you grieve over the Sundays you have thrown away, when the season of sickness overtakes you, and shews you the value of the opportunities you have lost! Then will you feel the force of that warning prophecy of our Saviour's, where he says, "The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it" (Luke xvii. 22). The days of the Son of man, so far as you are concerned, are the days when you are strong and healthy, the days when you can come into his spiritual presence, to hear his word, and to commune with him in prayer. These to you are the days of the Son of man: and if you throw away these days, and waste them, instead of turning them to good account, you will feel the want of them when they are no longer within your reach. Your hearts will long for them and desire them: but, alas! not one of them shall you see.

Another lesson to be drawn from what has been said, is the great importance both to me who am to teach, and to you who are to learn, of making the most of the time before us. My sickness, God be praised! has not been unto death. Next time it may be unto death: or God may let his heavy hand fall on some of you, and may remove you from my ministry, instead of taking me from you. In both cases the result

would be the same: I could no more teach you; nor could you any more learn from me. Let us work then, while it is yet day, lest the night overtake us when no man can work (John ix. 4). Let us not have to answer, brethren, for neglect on either side, in the great matter of your salvation. Do not you neglect your part; and God grant me grace that I may not neglect mine. And let it be your business to pray for us who are over you in the Lord, that we may be strengthened in our ministry, and that we may watch over your souls, like watchmen who know the trust committed to us; so that, when at the last we give in our account, we may do it with joy.

Lastly, if it be so sad a thing as I have described,—and I have spoken from my own feelings,—if it be so sad a thing to live for a few weeks in sight of the earthly tabernacles of our Lord and Saviour without being able to enter into them; what must it be if, like the rich man in the parable, we were condemned to live for whole ages in sight of heaven, without being able to enter into it! That is the true Jerusalem: those heavenly mansions are the true palaces of the King of kings. So long as we are in the wilderness of this world, we see only the outside of the tabernacle: we cannot enter within the veil, so as to behold with our own eyes the mercy-seat of God. Now if even the

outside be thus amiable, what must the inside be! If the very court of the tabernacle be so delightful to the christian soul, what must the Holy of Holies be? Here below in his tabernacles, though we know Christ to be present, we can see him only with the eye of faith. He has told us that where two or three are gathered together, there he is in the midst of us: and that promise of his is enough to assure us of his special presence, when we worship him in a christian congregation. This is all we can have here; and with it we must be content. But in his heavenly palace God appears in all his glories: there he will be seen face to face. Think how much more glorious, how much more lovely, how much more satisfying, that appearance must be, than anything we can feel or enjoy here below. But if it be so much more glorious, think, I beseech you, how grievous it must be to be deprived of all those glories. Will not your hearts long, will they not pine and faint, for admittance into those great glories? Alas! they will pine in vain. The door once shut cannot be re-opened. This will be among the severest pains hereafter of nominal half-and-half Christians. They will see all they have lost. They will know that they too might have been admitted into those blessed dwellings. They might: but the time is past: they are self-excluded, and for ever.

Strive then to make your calling and election sure. Strive to become true brothers of Jesus Christ; that you may be admitted for his sake into the palace of your heavenly Father. Strive, I say, to do this: for verily I say to you,—the words are our Saviour's, not mine,—"Verily I say to you, many shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able" (Luke xiii. 24). O terrible words of certain threat against the sleepy, against the lukewarm, against the worldly-minded, worldly-hearted Christian! Let the sound of these words sink deep into your ears: let their meaning fix itself in your hearts: let your thoughts settle upon them, and brood over them, when you return home. I will repeat them once more to you: they are worth hearing again and again. "Many shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able." Many, not one or two, but many shall seek to enter into the kingdom of God; that is, shall think about turning to him, and shall intend to do it one of these days, and shall talk about goodness, and shall now and then take up a Bible. They shall seek, they shall look for the way to heaven, as a rich man might look for a sixpence that he had dropt in a dusty road. But because they do not strive,—because they do not set about the work with all their heart and mind and soul and strength,—because they do not look

for godliness, as one of you would look for a golden sovereign, if you had lost one out of your month's wages,—therefore they shall not be able to enter in. They shall have the pain, the misery, the unspeakable wo and anguish, of seeing thousands and tens of thousands entering in, but themselves shut out; shut out, observe, not because they were profligate, or drunken, or thievish, or oppressive: but because they only sought, when they should have striven, because they crept, when they should have walked, and walked, when they should have run as in a race (1 Cor. ix. 24); because they did not feel during their lifetime that this wilderness of a world is no abiding-place for an immortal spirit. No: they loved earth and the things of earth, above God and the things of God. They gave their minds to this world, with its cares and pleasures, but knew and thought little about Christ, and had no wish to learn more. Their religion was one of days and rites and outward forms, instead of being an active principle running through their whole life. They served God partly from habit, partly for decency's sake, partly because they knew they must: but they did not serve him in the spirit of faith and love; and therefore the service was a burthen to them. Sunday, when they did not spend the greater part of it in business or amusement, was to them the dullest day of all the seven. In-

stead of longing to enter into the courts of the Lord, their secret pleasure was to get out again. In a word, they saw nothing amiable, nothing lovely in holiness, to make them desire and love it. What sort of welcome can such persons, who fancy they have been seeking heaven, but have been seeking it only as in a dream,—what sort of welcome, I say, can they look for from the God of holiness? What can be their lot, but to be driven from his presence into the outer regions of sin and death? God, who in his mercy has so lately preserved us from the pestilence, preserve us all, my brethren, from this worse, this second death! May we, through the help of his Spirit, become holy as he is holy; that we may be admitted for Christ's sake into heaven, that holy of holies, where are joys unspeakable, and pleasures for evermore.

A VISITATION SERMON,

Preached at Devizes, August 2, 1832, *before the Lord Bishop of Salisbury.*

OFFENSES IN THE MINISTRY A STUMBLINGBLOCK TO CHRISTIANS.

MATTHEW xviii. 7.

It must needs be that offenses come; but wo unto that man by whom the offense cometh!

THE occasion which led our Saviour to give this awful warning to his disciples, and to the Church after them, is well known. Some disputes had arisen among the apostles, as to which of them should be the greatest in the temporal kingdom of the Messiah. They had not yet learnt to serve God for love alone; or at least to serve him only for those heavenly blessings, which faith and love so elevate and sanctify, as to raise them above the shade of selfishness, and to invest them in the midst of their solid reality with a sort of ideal character well fitted to ennoble and to soften every heart that pants after them. The realities

to which the apostles were then looking forward, were the realities of earth. Their minds were still too much in the dark about the true character of their Master's mission, and the heavenly nature of his kingdom, not to be hoping for dominion here below. Places of power and trust at the Messiah's court seem to have been the objects which were now dazzling the fancies of the Galilean peasants selected by Jesus to be his followers. Nor are there many things more instructive in the story of these poor men, than the contrast between their thorough confidence in their good Master, and those petty views of personal aggrandizement, which mingled with their confidence in him, and lowered its value. For great must needs have been their trust, and, but for the flaw of selfishness, invaluable, when they could see in the meek and lowly Jesus an instrument to break in pieces the colossal empire which was then, with its legs of iron, overstriding and trampling on the world. This trust in God, so entire and so courageous, has scarcely had justice done to it. To me it seems well worthy of the old heroic times of the Jews. Men possest with it might have fought by the side of Gideon and Barak and David, and those others recounted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, who out of weakness were made strong, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens.''

Indeed there cannot be a stronger proof how

entire the confidence of the apostles in Jesus was, than the fact that, before the battle was begun, they should have been arranging and contending about their portions of the spoil. As if their Master had been king already, they had been disputing among themselves, St Mark tells us (ix. 34), who should be the greatest. It was not enough for them to know that, in realms so vast as the prophets and the Psalmist had promised to Messiah's sway, there must of necessity be many great. To take their stations as princes and governors among those many great, did not satisfy the ambition of these poor peasants. More than one aspired to be the greatest, and would be content with nothing less. A similar emulation is well known to have been exprest by the first and most distinguished of the Cæsars. But what appears admirable in the eyes of men, is often worthless in the sight of God. However great, according to mere human notions, that illustrious Roman may have been, so low is earth and everything earthly,—its views and standard and wisdom and conceptions,—in comparison with everything heavenly, that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater and higher than he. The emulation, which has been deemed no blemish in the character of one of the most renowned among the sons of men, must, if we believe our Saviour's words and emblematic

actions, be utterly destroyed and rooted out of the hearts of all such as aim to be the sons of God. For when the ambition of the disciples led them to inquire of Jesus, *Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?* Jesus called a little child to him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, *Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child*, —he continued, laying his hand perhaps on the child's head, as it stood by him shrinking into itself, and blushing at the notice taken of it,—*the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

Having thus, according to his wont, taken advantage of their curiosity to impress a lesson on them, and instead of a fact having given them a principle, our Saviour seems to have raised his eyes from the present toward the future; and discerning the scandals and impediments which would one day arise out of such worldly and contentious tempers as had just been manifested by his disciples,—discerning too how greatly those scandals and impediments would obstruct and endanger the path which he was making for men toward heaven, —the sad sight moved him to utter the warning wo, which immediately precedes my text: *Wo unto the world because of offenses!* As if he had said; "In the road over which my religion will have to travel,

I perceive a succession of stumblingblocks so great, that they will occasion the fall of many of those whom I am about to die to save. Occur they must, those sad and evil scandals, in a world like ours, overgrown with thorns, and beset with rough and stony places,—a world of sin, where God's best gifts are sure to be abused. But let no one infer from their occurrence that God has placed them there. God tempts none: God places a stumblingblock in the way of none. These offenses, like all others, will be brought into the Church by men, giving way to their evil passions, and seeking to indulge their corrupt appetites; and the introducers of the offenses I will judge. *It must needs be that offenses come; but wo unto that man by whom the offense cometh!*"

In discoursing more particularly on these words, I shall first call your attention to the kind of offenses especially intended in the text. In one sense indeed the warning is doubtless universal, reaching to every sort of stumblingblock that can be laid in the way of godliness, to every kind of offense which can be occasioned to weak or unlettered Christians. Thus it points at, and includes within its range, every profane allusion, every careless word, every alluring speech, or seductive action, by which a reverence for religion is likely to be lessened, or our brethren can be made to err. But though

these and all similar causes of offenses come under our Saviour's condemnation here, yet the context, I think, should induce us more especially to apply this wo, not so much to the declared enemies and easy disregarders of religion, as to persons professing themselves its chief friends, and probably fancying that they are so. As it was the ambition of the apostles, and their disputatious strife, which first led to the denunciation, so it is against the same faults,—let me rather say, against the same sins,—in the ministers of Christ's Church,—it is against everything, in them above all others, approaching to a worldly or a contentious spirit, that the wo seems to be more directly aimed.

And truly the mischief occasioned to the cause of Christ by the two evil spirits of covetous ambition and of dissension, since they have contrived to lodge themselves within the temple of the Most High, might well merit the severest wo. Look only at the inordinate pretensions and the monstrous usurpations of the papacy: look at those fierce and never-ending schisms, which have driven many a quiet man to seek shelter from their din in the nominal unity and lulling infallibility of Rome. The schisms and usurpations themselves are notorious: they are stumblingblocks of offense so great, that no one can help seeing them. But who can know, who estimate, the evil these offenses

have led to? I speak not here of such comparatively trifling things as persecutions by tongue or sword. Would they were the greatest evils to which the offenses in question have given rise! For then we might look forward to the certainty of their ending, at least in a better world, and meantime might stay ourselves on the consolatory thought, that after all to the greatest sufferers they would prove sources of the most abundant glory. But the evils I am referring to have no end, till you can find an end to eternity. A disgust against Christianity itself generated and nourished by the unchristian temper of its teachers, a suspicion that all must be false and hollow where so much is evidently unsound, concealed scepticism, avowed doubts, open unbelief, terminating perhaps in a rejection of all higher principles, and in a relaxation of every social tie,—these are the woes that have befallen too many from the offenses of schisms and of the papacy. And where shall we seek a remedy for hurts so grievous? Who on earth can cure? who can allay them? And what must be the portion of those who have brought such misery upon souls?

But still it may perhaps be asked: Does the text apply to us, who are neither papists nor schismatics? I answer, it applies to us also; not indeed as papists or schismatics, which formally and outwardly we

of course are not, but as inheriters and partakers of those evil passions and dispositions which have come to a head in schisms and in the papacy. From an inborn tendency to strife and worldliness, we, it is needless to say, are no more exempt, than the millions who have fallen into their snares. Therefore it behoves us to examine carefully, with a humble and self-distrusting heart, from what quarter the temptations, which have proved fatal to so many, are most likely to surprise us. Now it is scarcely too much to assert, allowance being made for the antithetical form of the assertion, that in men the strongest points are often the weakest, from the dangerous security which apparent strength is almost sure to beget. Suffer me then to suggest to you, my brethren, whether it may not perhaps be through the very citadels of our strength,*—the supposition cannot harm, and may put us on our guard,—may it not, to speak plainly what I feel earnestly, be under cover of our formularies and endowments, that the evil spirits of discord and of worldliness are most likely to steal upon us unprepared? In saying this, am I depreciating these formularies and those endowments? God forbid! Every true churchman must feel and be thankful for their usefulness. I rejoice that, in our liturgy and creeds and articles, we have

* Per praeruptum, eoque neglectum. Livy, v. 46.

such repositories of piety, such rallying points of faith, such sure landmarks of sound doctrine. I bless God for giving us an established Church, which, while it consecrates the State, and keeps religious truth among us plentifully fresh and pure, is fitted to carry that truth high and low, to every gradation of society, and furnishes the best of channels for universal popular instruction. These things are excellent, we all acknowledge; and yet, notwithstanding their excellence, they may still be an occasion of falling to some of us, not from their own defects, but from the infirmities of human nature.

So long as that nature, for example, is vain and prone to strife, so long will acute men embark too hastily and too warmly in controversy; so long will they swell out errors into heresy, and magnify existing points of difference, and busy themselves in seeking new ones. And what is this but the spirit of division? a spirit not confined to any one community, or to any particular age of the Church, but in a greater or less degree to be found in all Churches, and found in them too at all times: inasmuch as it originates in evil qualities coextensive with human nature. So too ecclesiastical covetousness, and the love of earthly sway, though they struck their roots deepest in the congenial soil of Rome, and spread with the most

luxuriant rankness in it, were assuredly not generated first in that soil, and still continue to spring up elsewhere. Wherever honours and emoluments are held out by the state in its just gratitude to sound learning and active piety, the inseparable tares of worldly-mindedness will come up among the wheat. The labourer, we know, is worthy of his hire: and without the hire there could be few labourers. But to labour in God's vineyard, for the work's sake, while we thankfully accept the hire, is one thing: and quite another thing is it to labour for that hire wholly, or even chiefly. The amount of work done may be the same in both cases: for there is nothing to prevent the hireling from going through his round of duties, with the same punctuality and activity as his more disinterested fellow-servants. Still the difference between the two, arising out of the difference in their motives, is immense: and men know and feel it to be so. Experience proves that nothing is surer to offend a people, or to detach them from religion, than a belief that its teachers are mercenary: just as nothing is more likely to win them to God, than the conviction that his ministers are serving him with singleness of heart, and with eyes steadily fixed on the great objects of our calling, the honour of Jesus Christ our master, and the good of souls. Yet the ser-

vice of the altar in this country must be a livelihood as well as a profession to so many, that there is too much reason to fear it will always be undertaken merely for the livelihood by some few; so long at least as human nature continues what it has been hitherto, thoughtless, and weak, and slow to frame a scheme of life on principles purely spiritual, and apt to be swayed by worldly objects, and liable to the dry-rot of self-interest.

This brings me to the second point which deserves your attention in the text,—namely, in what sense it must needs be that the offenses in question must come; or, to take the literal rendering of St. Matthew's words, what is the necessity of their coming. Certainly it is no physical or philosophical necessity, that our Saviour is here speaking of. It is no outward necessity arising from compulsion. Nor is it the internal necessity of an irresistible and unvarying law. For God's grace, if duly sought, will prove to be as sufficient for every individual in every successive age of the Church, as it was of old for the great apostle of the Gentiles. We must not put any such force upon our Saviour's language, nor imagine that he talked to his disciples with technical precision, like a lecturer in a Greek school. Speaking as he did to the people, he was wont to speak like one of the people, not indeed in substance—for in that re-

spect *never man spake* as he spake,—but in manner. Now in popular language we use *must* and similar words (and the Greeks, I believe, used ἀναγκη in the same way) to express a very high degree of probability, or rather to signify the fulness of expectation which that probability has produced in our minds. Thus we say, *it must rain to-morrow*, when the sky looks black and lowering; thus too we say of a sick man, *he must die*, when we see the symptoms taking a very unfavourable turn: and generally of anything that appears to us sure to happen, we say, *that it must be*. All then that our Saviour's words mean, when construed popularly,—and the parallel passage in Luke (xvii. 1) justifies us in so construing them,—is this: the offenses in question are sure to occur, not in this or that particular individual, from his being predestinated to commit them, but in some individuals, from the general violence of temptation and the weakness of our corrupt nature.

But the character of the necessity spoken of in the text will be seen, I think, still more clearly, if we consider further, that, in the offenses to which our Saviour was more especially referring, the temptations themselves spring out of certain necessary institutions. For example, wherever there are formularies,—and how can a church exist without them?—ground must needs be laid for dispu-

tations and divisions. Wherever again there is any fixed or regular provision for a ministry,—it matters not whether supplied by the wisdom of the state, the piety of individuals, or the liberality of a particular congregation,—let the provision only be sufficient, and such that its continuance may be reckoned on, and some will be allured by it into Christ's service, who for their own sakes never should have entered it. Nor is this evil to be avoided by curtailing the provision, even to the least sum possible. For sufficiency is a relative term. An income which might be very small for any one accustomed from childhood to the conveniences of life, might, and often would, have all the attractiveness of riches for those who have been born poor. Lessening the provision then would not stop the temptation: it would only lower its range, and bring it to bear on an inferior class of persons. Yea, were it to be reduced even to a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, still some would be found,—as Scripture teaches, and the analogy of the mendicant orders too clearly proves,—begging to be put into one of the priest's offices, that they might earn that piece of bread.* So long then as there is any provision for a ministry,—and some provision of the kind there ever must be everywhere,—it will be sure to open a door

* 1 Sam. ii. 36.

to ecclesiastical worldliness: just as in the other case, the creeds and articles and liturgies are sure to be turned into a handle for divisions. In both these cases the temptations, humanly speaking, are inseparable from the institutions. But the institutions are necessary, and must exist: the temptations then must exist also. And if they are powerful, (as we know them to be,) some will be found, in every age, weak enough to be carried away by them. Thus (by what is technically called a *necessity of consequence*) the offenses, without being fated to occur, will still be quite sure of occurring; so long at least as the riches of God's truth are committed to earthen vessels, liable to defects of every kind, liable, alas! even to fall, and break, and spill the treasures they contain, to the malignant joy of God's enemies, to the scandal of the world, to the grief and shame of God's people.

Such, it appears to me, is the plainest and most natural sense of this difficult and important text. Be this however as it may, thus much at least is happily quite clear, that, whatever may be the necessity for the offenses, no necessity is exercised, no force even exerted, on the offender; unless it be the gentle violence of the Spirit striving with him to hold him back from sin. This is clear from the circumstances of the fall of Judas, as related

in the Gospel of St. John: and I refer the rather to the history of that wretched man, because the nature of the temptation he was ensnared by makes his a case peculiarly to our purpose. He then,—whose offense, if any man's, was apparently necessary in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled,—even he, after he had covenanted to sell his friend and Lord, in the interval between the conception and the perpetration of his sin, had a way of repentance opened for him by the mercy of his forgiving Master. I allude to the events of that wonderful last evening, when Jesus, as if preparatory to his departure, dropt the veil of reserve which had helped to conceal him from his disciples, and shone forth on their minds in all his humanized glory, doubly more the Son of God than he seems ever to have shewn himself before. Those events, from the washing the disciples feet, to the dipping the sop and giving it to Judas Iscariot, might have melted a heart of stone. If Judas had been softened by them to repentance, and had thrown himself at his Master's feet, and confest his treason, and renounced it, he might still, in that eleventh hour, it would appear from Scripture, have been saved. For it was not till after he had received the sop,—till he had seen and resisted the sorrow of his Master, and the surprise and indignation of

his fellow-disciples,—it was not till foreknowledge the most evident, and meekness the most touching, had been tried on him to no good purpose,—that the Spirit of God abandoned him altogether. *And after the sop,* St John tells us, as if he wished to mark the time when the door of repentance was closed against him, *Satan entered into him.**

But if this be so,—if even the son of perdition need not have been lost, nor would have been, but for his own persistency in evil,—then most assuredly none need ever have been lost, none need be lost of those now living. Thus the history of the reprobate apostle throws a direct and useful light upon the text. For if he was not under a necessity to commit *his* sin, no more are we under

* The original is still more definite; Καὶ μετὰ τὸ ψωμίον τότε εἰσῆλθεν εἰς ἐκεῖνον ὁ Σατανᾶς. John xiii. 27. See also xiii. 2. The force of the two passages will be more easily perceived by comparing them with Luke's account, (xxi. 3,) which it seems to have been St John's object to guard from misconception. For in the first passage he substitutes for St Luke's phrase an expression weak enough to shew that Judas was still master of his actions; and he reserves the phrase, *Satan entered into him,* till after the sop, when it is introduced with τότε. Apparently St John would have us understand by it, that Satan, after the sop, *took possession* of the wretched traitor. In Matt. xii. 29, Mark iii. 27, and Luke xi. 26, our Saviour is represented as using a similar phrase in the same full sense.

a necessity to commit *ours*. The declaration, that *offenses must needs come*, is not stronger than the prophecies which point to the crime of Judas. Our Saviour assuredly cares as much for every one of us, as he did for the traitor friend who had bargained to lift up his heel against him. His arm is not shortened; and it is as ready now, as it was on the evening of his betrayal. The same hand, which would have snatched Iscariot out of the snare in which he was entangling himself, is ever stretched out to hold his servants back from sliding into a like evil. Therefore whatever any man's offense may be, and to whatever secondary cause it may be traceable,—be it to the deceitfulness of riches, or to fondness for doubtful disputations, or, as will at times happen in particular instances, to temptations of a more personal and painful kind,—the offender, and he alone, is chargeable with his offense: he might have escaped committing it if he would. A wo is therefore denounced against him,—a wo which, in warning him of his danger, declares and certifies his guilt: for no one threatens punishment against the guiltless. But a heavy punishment is threatened in the text against all who bring scandals into the church: consequently, as sure as God is just and true, so surely are they guilty. The offense, it is clear, must have been avoid-

able:* and for not avoiding it they are righteously condemned. And this is the burthen of their condemnation; that they have hurt the flock, which, as Christ's servants, they are bound to watch over and be tender of; and that they have raised impediments in the way to heaven.

What then is the practical lesson for us, my brethren, to draw from all these things? Surely this: that,—if the mischiefs of these offenses are so grievous and incurable,—if the temptations to them are so powerful and wide-spreading,—if the liability to them is so great,—if no religious community can hope to be quite free from them,—if the condemnation pronounced against them is so heavy and so fully merited,—the most searching examination must be desirable on our parts, to ascertain what progress those deplorable evils may have made among ourselves. Have we then of the Church of England,—it is the last point to which I shall in all humility request your attention,—been sufficiently on our guard against divisions and worldly-mindedness? I am aware what tender ground one treads on, in approaching questions such as these. But I feel that I am speaking among brethren, who will interpret favorably what is spoken friendly. Else what am I, that I should open my mouth in

* This is St. Chrysostom's argument in his exposition of the passage.

the presence of ministers, older,—as many of them must be,—and more experienced, and in a hundred ways superior to me? But my office emboldens me: and so do the dangers which environ us, and seem to warn us, as with a thousand tongues, that nothing must be wanting on our parts, which activity the most evidently disinterested, and concord the most perfect can supply, toward enabling us to meet the peril. We have a mighty struggle to maintain against the powers of evil: and the field of battle must be the hearts of Englishmen. If we can keep our hold on them, if we can preserve our foundations deep and wide in the conscientious affections of our countrymen, the storm may rattle against the casements, but by God's mercy the house shall not fall. And when we consider what that fall would lead to,—how much the empire would be shaken by it, how much of the happiness of the poor would be buried under it, how much quiet piety and sober truth and noiseless activity in the cause of good, would disappear and be destroyed together with it, how in a word the fall would loosen all the bands and holdfasts of our moral and religious civilization,—can we be too careful, brethren? not for our own sakes merely or principally; nor for the sake of Christ's Church, which we know shall ride through every storm; but for the sake of preserving many benefits to our

fellow-countrymen, and of averting from them many miseries,—shall we not be scrupulous, for their sakes as well as for our own, that no suspicion of offense may attach to us, which might alienate or weaken their regard?

Have we then been sufficiently careful to avoid the appearance of divisions? Nay, have we been duly on our guard, all of us, against admitting the reality? Are there not, I will not say parties in the Church, but partial views taken by too many, which are almost equally detrimental? What should we say of astronomers, if those of the Southern hemisphere were to deny the labours of the Northern; or they of the North were to disparage the exertions of the Southern? Should we not remind them, that the heavens are not divided,—that they who see but one hemisphere see only the half,—and that in the compass of the whole sphere there is room enough for all the stars which God has seen good to place in it? The constellations, Northern and Southern, do not make up one mighty whole, more certainly than the opposite doctrines of Christianity, and the various books of the New Testament, combine into one harmonious system. When one man says then, *I am of St Paul*, and another says, *I am of St James*, and a third says, *I am of St John*, what is this but repeating the folly of the Corinthians?

who were reproved by the apostle for contending about Apollos, and about Paul. As he then asked them in the earnestness of his expostulation, *Who is Paul? and who is Apollos?* so may we too be permitted to ask with humble fervour, Who is St Paul, that we should magnify him above St James? or St James, that we should magnify him above St Paul? or St John, that we should exalt him above either? Are they not all fellow-messengers to Christ's people? Are they not all pillars, each sustaining his own portion of christian doctrine? or rather,—to speak of them in their relation to ourselves, as our enlighteners,—are they not so many windows, each admitting, though from different sides perhaps, the light of heaven into the edifice? And shall we not avail ourselves of all those streams of light to mark the glories of the interior? seeing some things by the help of one window, and some perhaps more accurately by the light of another; but loving most to hasten to the centre, there to observe the relation of part to part, and their combination into a harmonious whole; till we are lost in adoration of the Almighty Architect, who, in the building of his Church, as in the temple of the universe, has delighted to shew himself a God of unity, and not of sameness.

But as the religion of Christ is one harmonious

whole, so likewise is the visible Church of England a whole, and a whole too of the same kind, a whole composed of various parts brought into a common centre; a whole of combination, a whole, it ought to be, of harmony. Were we more careful to keep this in mind, we should be freer than we now are from the imputation of division. We should be less eager about verbal agreement, knowing that there are generally many ways of saying the same thing. We should be prepared to see the ministers of Christ differing from each other in the lights and shades of their discourses; one perhaps insisting more frequently on one truth, and his brother in the next parish on another truth; though both would be ready perhaps, if need were, to lay down their lives for both truths equally. The prominence which under certain circumstances should be given to any particular doctrine, is a question of christian prudence: and as such, it might be well to make it the subject of friendly conference among ourselves. This is the best way of treating such questions; each for himself being only anxious to ascertain the shortest road to the hearts and understandings of his parishioners, and for that purpose being ever ready to profit by his neighbour's learning, or observation, or experience. But if these things should not divide us, much less should any difference of

mere delivery, such as preaching with or without book, or using more or less gesticulation,*—pardon me for mentioning such trifles!—be made a matter, as I fear it sometimes is, of comment and of suspicion. Is this the liberty which Christ has bought for us? Let us go back to the Jewish bondage; if such things are to be prescribed and meted out to us, not by those who are over us in the Lord, but by that vague and tyrannous abstraction, the general opinion of this or that class of men; so that I am to pass for an enthusiast with the one, or a formalist with the other, according as I adopt this manner or that. With regard to clerical amusements again, how many offenses would be spared, if we could only persuade ourselves, that he who joins in them moderately and discreetly, may do well! though he who can abstain from them in a gentle and uncensorious spirit, does better! if we remembered on the other hand, that, however wrong it may seem to some of us to be intolerant of admitted relaxations, it must be more wrong to be intolerant of professional strictness,—that our neighbour has at least as great a right to keep aloof from the world, as we have to mix with it,—and that in every case the worst thing we can do is to judge our brother harshly or unnecessarily. In a word,

* Dem de Cor. § 68. p. 305. Ed. Reisk.

let us make it our rule of life, to give our indulgence to others, and to keep our severity for ourselves. Then all those lesser distinctions, which serve so often to perpetuate parties, would soon be lost sight of: probably many of them would be laid aside; and the rest would be overlooked as insignificant.

Even with regard to doctrines,—to rise from small things to the greatest,—the same principles hold good. Every one may see, I think, that sameness of opinion is unattainable about those darker and more mysterious things which belong to the Lord our God, which human reason cannot fathom, and which Revelation has rather hinted at than declared. Every one with any modesty may apprehend further, that points, which the wisest men, the ablest, the most learned, the most pious, the most studious of Scripture, have differed upon, cannot be so clearly laid down in Holy Writ, as to make either opinion unallowable. Yet, if these be so, surely we ought not to read the 17th Article,—for to that my remarks tend,—bearing in mind, as we are bound to do, the circumstances of the times, and how it is guarded too from popular misapprehension by the tone and language of the Liturgy,—without feeling and admiring the tender prudence wherewith our Reformers drew it up; without appreciating their pious caution in not going a step

beyond the words of Revelation, to say either less or more; without being grateful to them for having exprest themselves on a point so difficult with such practical and comprehensive moderation. These surely are the feelings, which even a slight study of that Article, if conducted in a tolerant and humble spirit, should beget in us; not divisions and sharp-tongued disputations. Would any reasonable or kind man wish to reword that Article, so as to straiten the wholesome latitude which the Church at this point allows us? Is it not desirable to have the road so formed, that two equally good men may walk abreast in it, the one on the shady side, the other on the sunny? leaving room in the middle for the unpolemical Christian to walk humbly and contentedly between them. Or, to look at the question from a historical point of view, will any be bold enough to wish, that our Articles had been framed in such accordance with either Arminian or Calvinistic notions, as that either Leighton,* or Jeremy Taylor, should have been excluded by them? Yet the Church which could hold them, is surely large enough, at least in doctrine, for all Catholic Protest-

* There can be no doubt that Leighton was at least a denizen of the Church of England. After his retirement into Sussex, he was in the habit of preaching in his own and the neighbouring parish churches.

ants; provided they will only consent, each to keep his own place, and quietly mind his own business, avoiding curious questions, and devoting themselves, if ministers, to the edification and instruction of the souls committed to their charge.

Still in maintaining, as I have thus done, the great principle of christian freedom, the practical admission of which, from right motives, seems the surest preservative against offenses, and the best general ground of christian unity, it is impossible not to see, that liberty, like every other privilege, may be used offensively, and that, when so used, it becomes a wrong. We all remember how St Paul, that great exemplar as well as eulogist of charity and of freedom, teaches us, that they who are strong must bear the infirmities of the weak: that, though all things are lawful for us, all things are not expedient; that we must take care our good is not evil spoken of; that we must follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another.* Things whereby we may edify one another,—let this be our rule: the encouragement and improvement of our neighbour, let this be among our prime objects. And let these, and every other thing, be done quietly and peaceably, without ostentation or dis-

* Rom. xv. 1; 1 Cor. x. 23; Rom. xiv. 16, 19.

play. If at any time we are compelled to differ on a point of practice from any considerable number of our brethren, let it be manifest that we mourn over the difference, or at any rate do not pride ourselves upon it. Further let us be careful not to quit our brethren, even though it be to walk before them: remembering that the foremost horse in the team, if it were to detach itself and gallop onward, would do its fellows, and its master too, an ill service. Above all, let us beware of mistaking any little side-chapel, in which some few may be officiating, however actively, for the whole vast edifice of the Church of England; and let us be cautious not to carry on our parleyings with persons out of the Church, in such a manner as to appear to be turning our backs on our brethren and companions within. For all these things irritate and prejudice men: they are inimical to peace, and are offensive.

Thus have I brought before you all the likeliest forms and sources of division which have occurred to me: and what do they all amount to? Brethren! for Christ's sake, who died and lives for us, that we might all be made one in him, let these offenses, if real, as they too surely are imputed to us, be laid aside for ever. Let all party names and party words, which may unhappily have been in use hitherto, be dropt on all sides, as tending

to sects and schisms. Let us cultivate each other's intimacy, and study each other's sentiments, giving every one a patient hearing, approving all we can, and laying no burthen or restraint on any, beyond what the Church and its authorities have deemed it advisable to impose. In matters such as those I have been speaking of, half the mischief is wont to arise from misconception. The differences, to use the happy term by which our forefathers would have designated them, are really and truly misunderstandings. The more we know of each other's characters and motives, the better we shall understand each other: and out of that better understanding will quickly spring mutual respect first, and then confidence and union. And never sure was union to any class of men more indispensable. In this age of active, and, I fear, too often hostile, organization, shall we alone be incapable of coalescing for defense? or of combining for good? or of taking friendly counsel together for our spiritual improvement? or of acting in concert for the benefit of our fellow-christians? Shall we alone be incapable of union? Forbid it, gracious Lord! Forbid that ought so unseemly, so offensive, should befall thy Church in this land! Make us one with thyself, thou great Atoner! reconcile and reunite us to each other; that, in the war we

have to wage for the advancement of thy kingdom, we may move on together in ranks impenetrably firm; while all men gladly know us to be thy soldiers and thy servants, by our bearing, and our badge of love.

Such is my prayer, brethren, for all of us: and such doubtless, were they now living, would be substantially the prayer of both those heavenly-minded men, to whom I just now pointed, as the best of proofs of the blessed comprehensiveness of our communion. From Taylor, on such a subject, it is needless to quote: but hear what Leighton, writing in those troublous times, says on the advantages of unity. "In the defense of the truth let us be of one mind, and all as one man. *Divide and conquer*, is Satan's maxim, and all his followers have it; and therefore let us hold that countermaxim, *Unite and be invincible.*"*

The other point, beside division, on which I ventured to recommend a diligent self-examination, is worldly-mindedness. But happily on this source of offenses it cannot be needful to say much. To name it, if it exists, is to condemn it. In the great majority of instances, the imputation, we

* The whole passage,—it occurs in the Commentary on St Peter, upon the words *Of one mind*, iii. 8,—is well worthy to be studied by all lovers of christian peace.

trust, is undeserved. For surely we must all feel, that this is no time for money, or for lands, and sheep and oxen, and men-servants and maid-servants; seeing the fashion of this world is passing away before our eyes. Still it must not be forgotten, that in a rich, commercial, luxurious matter-of-fact age, worldly-mindedness is able to assume so many insidious forms and specious names, it often passes undetected, and is almost welcomed as a virtue. Many a man, if he were told plainly to love money, and the world, and the things of the world, would cry with honest indignation, *Get thee behind me, Satan;* who yet, —when the tempter urges on him the duty of making a proper provision for his family, of paying a due regard to appearances, of living up to his station, of getting on in his profession, and the like,—is taken with the name of duty, and receives the advice as a treasure into his heart, without essaying or sifting it. And good advice in truth it might be, if practically it meant what it appears to mean. But *proper* and *due* are very elastic words; and it requires but little negligence in using them to stretch them into *improper* and *undue*. Thus, under the guise of prudence and of duty, and, it may be, sometimes even of self-sacrifice, worldly-mindedness creeps in upon men, and rises within them every year; and almost

every month, a little; till by the middle of their age it has filled their heart, and overwhelmed it, and drowned whatever principles of holiness and of love there might be in it. But these are the very life-blood of Christianity. Deprived of them, it ceases to be what God designed it, a heavenly life in the soul, spiritualizing our whole being: it becomes earthy, and hardens, and dies away, till nothing is left of its religion and its morality but the carcase and dry bones,—a decorous observance of outward forms, a strict regard to all the decencies of conduct, and a few cold prudential maxims. This, or something like it, happens to so many in ages circumstanced like ours,—the evil has such a variety of roots, and spreads so widely,—that no class however generally religious, no inclosure however sacred, can hope to be quite free from it. What then if it should have extended its fibres, even into the heritage of God? Surely the thought of such a possibility should urge us to the most diligent examination. Let us spare neither blossom nor fibre, wherever we can lay our hand on it. Let us shew no mercy to any selfishness, however plausible, that may beset us, for all its showy colours and pretences. Let us be on the watch, each over his own heart, against the first indication of a worldly spirit. Above all, when we search our bosoms, let it be like men who are

aware that they need light, and must pray for it,—like men who know that they are liable to deceive themselves, and that in such matters self-deceit is fatal.

But it is not enough that we purify and weed our hearts from the germs of professional ambition, from the fibres of worldly cares, from a distrustful tendency to burthen our minds with anxious thoughts about the future: we must also clear ourselves in these times from imputations, the most indiscriminate and reckless, of worldliness and covetousness in the gross. There are men, who, if they saw one sparrow-hawk, and a dozen larks, would call them all kites at least, if not vultures. By men of this sort the accusation I am speaking of is urged against us most unsparingly: and I fear it has been listened to sufficiently to do us no little mischief. Undoubtedly it is no new charge to bring against God's servants, that they do not serve him for nought. But having been brought against us, it must be refuted. And how may that best be done? Truly by following the gospel rule of overcoming evil with good: it must be done by opposing to the accusation proofs the most undeniable of disinterestedness. This is the right defense for a body of christian ministers to make against a charge of this nature: and it is a defense which will have full weight

given to it in the minds of the English people. Our countrymen, the true people of England, are apt indeed to be led astray: but they are not blind, nor ungenerous, nor ungrateful: and when they see that we have learnt, in whatever station we are, therewith to be content; when they see that our wealth, such as it is, is valued by us chiefly as a means of assisting others; when they see your labours of love, in beneficence, in teaching, in going among the poor, in spiritual and bodily ministrations, in every shape of active kindness,—and see too that you do all this readily and cheerfully, like men who make a business of doing good; they will venerate your persons and your doctrine, and learn to love the Church of Christ doubly for your sakes. And they *will* see these things; for their eyes are upon you. Hitherto your good deeds have past comparatively unnoticed: but now the attention of the people has been called to them: they will be looked for, and observed, and acknowledged joyfully by a thousand and a thousand tongues, till the ignorance of foolish men is put to silence. The truth will at last be made to shine forth clearly; and it will shew all things in their just proportions. The stumblingblocks, which lately seemed so numerous and formidable, will prove to have been insignificant and few: the offense will cease: and the wo

pronounced against it will be changed into a glory and a blessing.

It would be sad to think that it could be otherwise, even in a single instance. It would be sad to think it possible, that, when this terrible voice inquires of us, *Where is the flock which I entrusted to you?* it should appear that,—while we have been contending about interminable points, or seeking a richer charge perhaps, and aiming at ecclesiastical distinctions, honorable if they come unsought to a servant of Christ as a reward, but worthless and disgraceful to him if made the object of his exertions,—some lamb has remained unfed, some sheep has wandered and has perished, which might have been saved if we had been heedful. The thought of such a possibility (not from worldliness alone,—that is amongst the least common of our faults, though the oftenest imputed,—nor from divisions alone, but from oversight, from easiness of disposition, from the seductions of literature or of temporal avocations, from indolence, from timidity, from harshness, from want of judgement, from any single one of the numberless sins and stumblingblocks which lie in the path of Christ's minister) might well shake the heart of the stoutest at his ordination: nay rather wo to that heart which at such a time is not shaken by it! The dread of such an event might disquiet the death-

bed of the best among us, were he not comforted and sustained by Christ's merits. The realization of it,—and who shall say that it may not be realized in his case?—might make him sink before the judgement-seat of Christ, and almost poison the very joys of heaven. Think of hearing a cry from the very midst of that miserable company on the left hand; *If thou hadst done thy duty by me, I should not be here; thou hast ruined my soul.*

But I would have you all remember, my christian brethren, that it is not the ministers of our Lord alone, who are liable to be the objects of a cry so fearful. Every parent, every guardian of youth, every head of a family, every friend, has opportunities entrusted to him, more or less, of instructing and improving some one or more of his fellow-creatures. And if he have neglected those opportunities, what has he to look to, except the prospect of a like cry? *But for thy negligence I should not be here: through thee am I descending into that place of torment.*

How then should we all pray for God's Holy Spirit, to assist us in fulfilling every trust, moral or religious, which may fall to us! How should we of the Clergy more especially pray!—join, good people, in that prayer; pray for us your pastors, and for yourselves also,—that God would

be pleased to watch over us, and to overrule all our doings to your good; that he would prosper our labours, supply our deficiencies, pardon our failings, and make them harmless to the souls of others; that he would raise us above a vain and perishable world, to a life of active holiness, and meek and humble brotherly love; that he would teach us to avoid all offenses, real or imaginary, which might hinder you in your christian journey; finally, that he would give us strength and wisdom faithfully to discharge all our duties as your appointed shepherds under Christ, feeding his flock, and nourishing and increasing it, and leading it through the wilderness of this world to the land of everlasting rest. Grant this, O heavenly Father! for the sake of thy dear Son, the chief Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

RELIGION, THE HUMANIZER OF MAN,
AND SUPPORTER OF SOCIETY.

A VISITATION SERMON,

Preached at Marlborough, July 12, 1831,
before the Venerable the Archdeacon of Wilts,
and published by desire of the Clergy.

TO THE

VENERABLE ARCHDEACON MACDONALD,
&c. &c.

My dear Sir,—You will be a little surprised perhaps at the sight of this dedication, considering the time which has elapsed since the accompanying sermon was preached before you. But having been called upon by the Bishop and his Clergy, in a way which I could not decline, to print my this year's sermon at Devizes, I am forcibly reminded that a

similar request from yourself and the other clerical friends whom I met at Marlborough, is still uncomplied with, though made a year ago. Some apology is due for this delay: permit me now to tender that apology to you and them, in the shape of the sermon itself, with all its deficiencies upon its head.

Could those defects have been cured by a little pains, they would have been long ago. But the chief fault is one which there would have been no remedying, except by writing another longer sermon, and tacking it on to the one I preached. I allude to my having omitted taking anything like a positive view of the subject. The current of opinions I had to contend against, in maintaining religion to be the great humanizer of society, carried me too far out of my course. The previous questions, which our clearsighted ancestors would have passed over as indisputable, but which in these days cannot be taken for granted, occupied me so long, that no time was left for pursuing the main branch of the subject. May it hereafter be taken up by some one more qualified to do it justice! Though too vast for any single sermon, without far exceeding modern limits, it is one of the noblest secondary truths which a Christian could set forth and establish. That it is a truth both of fact and of speculation, I

hold to be most certain. The fact, as regards the past, may be easily proved from history; which abundantly testifies that hitherto the prime instrument in humanizing and civilizing the world has been religion: while, as regards the future, all the probabilities deducible from the nature of Christianity, and from the tendency of its influences direct and indirect upon the human character, lead plainly, I think, to the conclusion, that the faith of Jesus with its accompaniments is the engine we ought to look to for working great and lasting improvements in the moral condition of mankind. What might not be expected from the influence of christian marriages on families? from the opportunities of reflexion forced upon the rich, and secured to the poor, by christian Sundays? from the general study of such a divine collection of biography, history, poetry, and morals, as is comprised in the one volume of the Bible? from the existence of a body of men in every land, set apart for the oral instruction of the poor, and for keeping alive among all classes the great seminal ideas of God, and faith, and duty? We have only to look at what the Gospel has done already,—how is has elevated and softened the hearts of thousands upon thousands; we have only to keep in mind the marvellous changes it has wrought in individuals of all coun-

tries, and ranks, and ages, and natural tempers, and habits, and characters, and acquirements; to judge how humanizing the effect upon society would be, were Christianity to be generally received as the main spring and rule of conduct. How indeed could its effects be other than most humanizing, when by forbidding pride, revenge, sensuality, sloth, the love of money, the love of pleasure, and everything else that hardens or brutalizes the heart, it strikes at all the roots and sources of savageness of every kind, or rather raises the heart above them, to humility, meekness, temperance, truth; and by a happy combination of opposite excellencies contrives to unite industry and activity with contentedness, and teaches men to be forgiving and self-denying, without making them cowardly or unsocial? For the progress of mankind it provides, by enjoining us to forget the things which are behind, and press forward to the things before us, till we attain to the perfection of the All-perfect; while it secures the stability and good order of society by the family links of brotherly love.

Such, I need not say to you, would naturally have been my topics, had I attempted to prove the truth which, as it was, I barely enunciated. Their enumeration is enough to convict me of the great imprudence of undertaking a plan which it was

impossible to execute. Instead of completing the building I had designed, I did little beside clearing away the rubbish, and perhaps raising a pillar or two of the portico. Defective however as my work is, it seems to me I cannot with propriety defer its publication any longer. Allow me, Sir, respectfully to dedicate it to you, and to my brethren the Clergy of your Archdeaconry, in the hope that their friendly anticipations of its usefulness may not prove altogether groundless, and that the Sermon with all its faults may conduce to the edifying of its readers.

I remain, my dear Sir,

Your much obliged

and obedient servant,

AUGUSTUS W. HARE.

Alton, Sept. 29th, 1832.

RELIGION, THE HUMANIZER OF MAN, AND SUPPORTER OF SOCIETY.

LUKE viii. 35.

And they came to Jesus, and found the man out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind.

I HAVE selected these words for the groundwork of my discourse, because they appear to me to furnish a very striking instance of the benefits which true religion is capable of conferring on society. The wretch who had been driven by the devil into the wilderness, who had been often bound with chains and fetters, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces, for none could tame him,—is at once an emblem and an example of human nature in a savage state. Take from the story all that is supernatural and

peculiar to the time of our Saviour's stay on earth; and what remains? A man untamable by force, and hardened against punishment, reclaimed to civilized habits by the gospel. No apology, I should hope, can be necessary for considering the story under this point of view. Our Saviour's miracles are so generally recognised to be more than proofs of power; over and above their importance as evidence of his authority, they are so universally acknowledged and felt to have a spiritual and moral value; when we read, for instance, of his cleansing some poor leper, we are so naturally led to think of the fouler leprosy of sin which he washed away; when we speak of his having raised the dead, we are all of us so accustomed to ascend from the letter to the spirit, and to direct the minds of our hearers to that diviner act of mercy whereby he has raised the dead in trespasses and sins; that I trust I shall be pardoned for following a similar course on the present occasion, and for calling your attention to one of the moral truths latent in the miracle of Gadara.

The truth, if I apprehend it rightly, amounts to this: that religion can win its way to hearts barred against every other influence; that it can soften and conquer dispositions, which would else remain intractable and savage; and that hereby, in addition to all its other and higher merits, it

establishes a title to be considered the great humanizer of mankind.

This, if I mistake not, is the truth involved in the miracle: and a most important and practical truth it is. Let none imagine it applicable only to men in the under stages of society, or fancy it can in no wise concern us. Experience has evinced, and is evincing daily, that men of savage hearts and savage deeds may be generated from the offscourings of civilization, no less than amid the barrenness of the desert. Nay, of the two extremes, the savages of civilization are the more dangerous; inasmuch as with the same untamable dispositions they combine greater knowledge, fiercer passions, ampler means, and above all a larger field for mischief. The heart sickens at considering what evils might be done by a few hands, if the rich and brittle edifice of prosperity, which by God's permission has been so laboriously reared in this country during a long succession of generations, were abandoned by him even for a few short moments to human laws and human vigilance. When the Lord had ceased to keep the city, we should soon find that the watchman waketh but in vain. For what, after all, can human laws avail against men who own no moral tie? The crafty elude, the sanguine overlook, the violent defy them. Apart from their moral obligation, their

only hold on man is through the medium of his bodily fears; and against these the heart easily learns to harden itself, and will even take a sort of pride in braving them.

Since even laws then, if considered as merely human ordinances, are so manifestly inadequate to the protection of the community, what remains to supply the deficiency but religion? It is that, and that alone, which can awaken and keep alive a sense of duty in a country, which can bind the moral law upon the hearts of men, which can set before their reason an Almighty ruler, the ever-present witness of all their actions, the hater of iniquity, the punisher of the wicked. It is religion, and that alone, which has the sacred power of communicating life to institutions; and which can fix the laws deeply, as with living roots, in the imagination and conscience of a people.

Accordingly it was the wisdom of all the ancient states to strengthen themselves by some religious sanction. In so doing, however false or corrupt the superstition they resorted to may have been, still, in appealing to it for help, and staying themselves as they might on its authority, they paid a homage to the great principle, that nations, if they wish to stand, must rest on something superhuman. Now if even false systems are serviceable to prop a state, how much more must

truth be serviceable! If even out of the acorns and husks of Paganism a sustenance could be extracted for the body politic, how much more must the fine wheat of the Gospel strengthen and support and nourish it! This is the sum of the matter according to the judicious Hooker. "Seeing it doth appear (says that great writer) that the safety of all states dependeth upon religion, and that, whatever good effects do grow out of their religion who embrace instead of the true a false, the roots thereof are the truths intermingled with the errors, because no religion can wholly and solely consist of untruths; therefore we have reason to think that all well-ordered commonweals are to love true religion as their chiefest stay."

Such was the opinion of all practical antiquity. But it was pre-eminently the conviction of those great social architects, our ancestors of the middle ages; so many of whose institutions are still towering amongst us: God preserve them unimpaired from all decay and violence, to shelter and be a blessing to posterity! These institutions, which have stood such a number and variety of shocks, were all either directly founded on Christianity, or at least were intimately connected with it, and designed to be upheld by it. And surely the foundations and buttresses must have been well chosen, of buildings which have endured so long.

A new wisdom however has unfortunately sprung up of late years. Religion, it seems, is no longer necessary to the welfare of nations. It is not even indispensable to the morality of individuals. "The distinctive character of modern unbelief (says a learned churchman of the present day) is the attempt to supersede Christianity, and to make men moral without its guiding and restraining influence. It is assumed, if not asserted, that good instruction and prudential feelings are enough for a man; that his interest will save him from vice; and that the cultivation of his intellect will lead him to virtue."

Such are the opinions which are now threatening to displace and supersede the Gospel in this country. Their introduction into it, or at least their propagation in it, I believe, is of recent date. But originally they are of foreign growth; as the following remarkable passage from the works of a great modern writer shews. "These enthusiasts do not scruple to avow their opinion, that a state can subsist without any religion better than with one; and that they are able to supply the place of any good which may be in it, by a sort of education they have imagined, founded in a knowledge of the physical wants of men, progressively carried to an enlightened self-interest."*

* Burke, vol. v. p. 270.

Would not any person, who heard this extract, imagine that it must be nearly of the same date with the preceding one? that they both spake of the same country, of the same people, of the same times? Alas! no. However just a picture the latter extract may give of a set of men in England at the present day, it was written above forty years ago, without any reference to this country. The enthusiasts mentioned in it are the speculative unbelievers who infested France at the commencement of their dreadful revolution.

The opinion then that society can hold together without religion, is not new. It has been tried on the largest scale whereon experiment was ever made: and the results are written in characters of blood large enough, one would have thought, to deter even the most imprudent. Never before were so many horrors committed in any civilized country within so short a time. They were committed systematically too, and boastingly, in a way that proved them to be the natural fruits of the tree of irreligious morals, which the unbelievers had been so sedulously rearing; as if on purpose to convince the world, what a poor, furious, miserable creature man becomes, when left to walk in the light of his own eyes, and after the devices of his own heart. Yet slips from that deadly tree have been imported, and are propagated in this land: and the

very doctrines, the dissemination of which among our neighbours, not half a century ago, was followed by such prodigies of horror, those very doctrines are now promulgated openly and confidently amongst us.

Newly revived error may best be met by a reassertion of ancient truth. Suffer me then on the present occasion to bring forth and set before you things old indeed,—and God be praised that they are so! God be praised that the corner-stones of society, the elements of order, the principles of righteousness, the materials of all the manly and all the passive virtues, have not remained undiscovered till our times! The things I would speak of are indeed old: but old as they are, when the ancient landmarks are threatened with removal, it becomes the servants of our Zion to cry aloud: *These are the old and the good ways: walk therein; and ye shall find safety and rest* (Jeremiah vi. 15).

To point out the beauty and solidity of those ancient ways, in comparison with the unsafe, the unstable, the treacherous and miry bypaths which some would substitute in their stead, shall be the object of the remainder of this sermon. With this view I shall first shew the worthlessness and the weakness of mere prudential selfishness, for the purposes to which the infidel would

fain apply it: and I shall then add a few remarks on the comprehensiveness and excellency of that principle of love, on which the Law as well as the prophets hung; on which depends the welfare of communities, no less than our hopes of a spiritual and eternal reunion with the Father.

In the first place, mere prudential selfishness is worthless as a social principle. It makes every man his own centre: it must therefore tend to insulate. It leads a man to refer everything to his own temporal and bodily advantage: it must therefore tend to degrade. I say, to his own temporal and bodily advantage: because once close the windows which religion has opened into the world of spirit and of eternity, and what is left for man to fix his eyes on, but time and the body? These then are the objects which will engross his thoughts, if wise. To live long, and to see good days, in the lowest worldly meaning of the terms, must be the end and aim of his forecasting. A regard for health, an attention to property, a concern for reputation, may be justly expected on such a principle. But are these the virtues to rear a state on? or which, after its erection, can uphold it? Who that was actuated by such a principle alone, would be in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in cold and na-

kedness? Who would brave contempt, and obloquy, and misapprehension, and neglect, and popular ingratitude, and all the other physical and mental sufferings which a man is in so many ways obliged to undergo, if he would benefit his fellow-creatures? Disinterestedness, self-denial, self-devotion, self-sacrifice,—what in the hour of trial would become of a state without qualities such as these? Yet how are these qualities to be inculcated in the school of systematic selfishness? They are foolishness and madness, and involve a contradiction, to the mere prudential understanding. The system then which the philosophic unbeliever would set up instead of Christianity, is worthless as a social principle: because it is inimical to those heroic virtues, without which no state, except one circumstanced as China is, could long subsist: and no state whatever could subsist happily.

But, if I mistake not, still heavier objections to the system remain behind. The social virtues which it does prompt, are unstable and foundationless, and at the best can only be superficial. As a check on injurious personal excesses, prudence may be efficacious: for in them the punishment treads so closely, or at least so certainly, on the heels of the offense,—sickness on intemperance, pecuniary embarrassment on unthrift, and

the like,—that it is scarcely possible to indulge in the offense, without afterward suffering the penalty. Here then prudence may operate as a check; because the offender and the sufferer are one. But with offenses against our neighbour the case is different. There the punishment, so far as this world is concerned, is often separated from the evil act; the gain or pleasure accruing to the injurer; the loss or suffering or annoyance falling not on him, but on the injured. In these cases,—and in one shape or other they comprise far the larger part of social morals,—what hold has society on the man who takes interested prudence for his sole guide? Beside the coarser penalties of the law, I see no reasonable motive which can deter such a man from committing any gainful crime, or from seeking any unlawful gratification at another's cost, or from indulging any perverse humour, except a regard for reputation, and a dread of public opinion. And now what is reputation? or, in other words, what is public opinion, but a variable and fallacious standard, itself needing a higher, and steadier, and purer standard to keep it right? If it be not frequently elevated, it will sink: if it be not ever and anon corrected by heavenly observations, it will guide us toward the North or South, instead of toward the East: if it be not continually

purified, it will grow daily more corrupt. The great sea of public opinion requires to be salted with Christianity: else it would soon putrefy. But besides, reputation must depend mainly on the outsides of things. We judge a man by what he seems to be, and have neither the means, nor the opportunity, if we had the right, of looking much below the surface. Character, in a word, depends mainly on appearances. But if so, what sort of virtue will that be, which a regard to character generates? Will it not be a virtue of appearances, void, or at least careless, of more substantial worth? The consistent wish of the man whose goodness had been framed on a theory such as we have been speaking of, would be—if I may express in the words of a heathen poet the desires of a character below heathenism,—

Da mihi fallere, da justum sanctumque videri.

All on such a system may be false and hollow. If the man observe the decencies, he may disregard the charities of life. If he shew himself obliging and agreeable when in public, he may be sullen and tyrannical at home.

This leads me to remark a third inherent taint in the prudential system, considered as a social principle. There is no sufficient provision in it for truth. If there be one virtue, which,

more than another, is the sheet-anchor of society, it is truth. If there be one social virtue, which, more than another, tries the soundness and solidity of a character, it is truth. It behoves us then to examine what security we have for truth, under the prudential system. Now to abstinence from gross and downright falsehood it may certainly lead; because it can be made a person's palpable interest not to be detected in a falsehood. But where under such a system would be that pure and simple-hearted and courageous truth, which it befits morality to foster and protect, as the noblest ornament of man, and the chief bond of civilized society? Such truth, a truth to a man's own hinderance, it can never be made his interest to speak: therefore he who is guided by interest alone, will never speak it.

The fact is,—and it furnishes a key perhaps to much that has been said on the subject,—prudence is not an active principle. At best it can only restrain and regulate and temper: but man has need of something more. It is not enough that he be held back from doing evil, unless he be also prompted to do well. But active moral principle on the selfish system there can be none. It is not from prudence, which freezes, or from interest, which contracts, that we can expect streams of benevolence to gush forth, and spread their blessings

over the community. How then on the selfish system are the social energies and virtues to be aroused and stimulated to action? The only apparent means of effecting this is to call in the assistance of the passions. These indeed are agents as powerful in the moral world, as the heated vapour which modern discoveries have subjected to a man's bidding, is in the physical. But like it, the passions can only be made serviceable while under coercion and controll. The moment they are allowed to get the mastery, they are sure to explode in mischief. Here then occurs a new and important consideration. If the passions are called in to give life and action to the mechanism of society,—and unless they are, the social active virtues must collapse and waste away for want of exercise,—will mere prudence be enough to govern them? Will the boiler be strong enough for the steam? The experiment is not new. Ask those who have been conversant with youth, how far mere prudence is efficacious in controlling the violence of the passions. Alas! how often, even when backed by conscience, and aided by a sense of duty and of responsibility,—how often even when, standing with the Bible open in her hand, and pointing to its denunciations against sin, she has called on men in God's name to desist, as they valued their immortal souls,—even under these circumstances how often,

how continually does the sinner rush by her to his passion-prompted sin, as the war-horse rushes into the battle! When even heavenly prudence is thus often seen to fail of reining in the passions, can we suppose that earthly prudence will not fail? Can we hope, or even dream that it will govern them so perfectly, as to direct their energies to good?

The new morality then is weak as well as worthless. It is barren of excellence: it rests on no sufficient basis: it is hollow and superficial: it has no force as a moral tie. This is true even of the rich: but far truer is it, and more surely so, of the poor. What prudential motive can induce the poor of a country to respect the property of the rich? Not the law; for none could execute the law against a population combined for evil. Not a deduction of reasoning; for their passions would tell them, it was neither reasonable nor equitable that one man should abound in superfluities, while hundreds, good as he, were suffering from want of food and raiment. Not, above all, a sense of interest; for to their eyes the interest would be on the side of crime. *But the time will come*, the theorist will doubtless answer, *when by the diffusion of education all these errors will be corrected.* Will come! is it come already? If not, how will you support society during the interval of pres-

sure? Hitherto you have been working with religion for your centre. Remove that, as you are now trying to do, and what shall keep us from dropping into barbarism, before your godless arch of sand,—it is no better, nor firmer,—is completed? This is a sufficient answer to the whole scheme. Else it might easily be shewn that there is no such remedial power as these philosophers conceit in mere instruction.* It would only engender the knowledge that puffeth up; whereas it is charity that edifieth: it is christian love, the forgetter, not the idolater of self, that can alone build anything worthy to stand, or capable of standing long.

If then society is to be preserved, and the people are to be kept within the pale of duty, it can be done only by one method, the method which has prevailed hitherto,—the method to which the religious instincts of mankind, guided thereto by Providence, if not directly enlightened by revelation, seem to have led them in the very beginning of society,—the method which from that time to the present hour has preserved so many states in all their rich gradations of rank and property, binding order to order, and man to man, with the

* See a passage to the same effect in Dr. Chalmers' late work on Political Economy. Ch. xv. sect. 6. p. 433.

cords of mutual trust and love: it can only be done by the instrumentality of religion.* Pure Christianity,—for that is our religion, and the only one possible in this age and nation,—speaks with equal authority and equal tenderness to every class and order of men. If it is the protectress of the rich, in the security which it affords to property: it is the protectress of the poor, in the threats which it denounces against oppression. If it inculcates

* The United States of America would doubtless be urged by some as furnishing a strong exception. But before we allow their apparent prosperity to shake our deep conviction of the undeniableness of a principle warranted by all previous history, the following points should be ascertained. How far is each State an exception, in reality? How long has it been an exception, and to what degree? Which states of the Union are the most religious? Which states contain the most peaceable, the best, the happiest population? the most religious, or the least? The answer to these questions would perhaps satisfy us, that there is little in the circumstances and prospects of America, to invalidate the general conclusion that, except in national religion, there can be no permanent security, either for the quiet and civilization of a people, or for the strength and solidity of a commonwealth. It should be remembered moreover that the strength and the enduring perseverance of independent America have never yet been put to the trial; and that a State, like a house, may be built upon the sand, and yet may make a goodly shew, till the floods and the wind come against it.

contentment on those who want, it enforces, line upon line, and precept upon precept, the freest liberality on those who abound. It inspires feelings of brotherhood and spiritual equality, which soften the differences of condition in this life, and make them seem comparatively unimportant. By instructing us to look on those differences as resulting from the will of God, it takes off the harshness which cannot fail of attaching to them, if viewed as merely human institutions, and leads men to acquiesce in the wisdom and justice of an arrangement which God has established. More particularly it has consecrated poverty, by teaching us that the Son of God during his residence on earth was poor. On the other hand, it would have the wealthy consider themselves only as trustees, and utterly condemns all pride and arrogance and hardheartedness, and whatever else is galling or offensive in persons of high station, as dispositions most hateful in the sight of Heaven. In a word, if love, the parent of all disinterested action,—if truth, the great cementer of society,—if peace, the chief end of legislation,—if meekness and condescending kindness, the sources of affection and goodwill,—if these things, humanly speaking, strengthen a state, and add to the happiness of a people, these gifts doth Christianity,

while she moves on heavenward, shower down with both hands upon the children of men.

Suffer me for a moment to magnify our office, while I remind you, brethren, with awful joy, that we are God's ministers to our countrymen for these very things. It is ours, in the name of Jesus Christ, to cast out the unclean spirit, which hurries men to deeds of lawless violence. It is ours, to instruct and benefit this countless people, and to humanize them more and more. It is ours, above all, to form them, as far as may be, to those habits of practical holiness and righteousness, which, while they establish a throne and exalt a nation, characterize every one who is born of God. God has committed this great charge to us, and in the power of his word, and the promised cooperation of his Spirit, has furnished means sufficient for its fulfilment. Let us not be damped then or dispirited with difficulties, which he can obviate: let us not be terrified and stopt by dangers, which he can scatter and dispell. Be the signs of the times what they may, our cause, the cause of Christianity in these kingdoms, is in the hands of Christ, our King: and he will overrule the issue as seemeth to him most fitting. Only let us persevere, remembering that, in proportion as we labour devotedly in our calling, in the same propor-

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Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 27 February, 2016